

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2020 10:22 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	23
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Scaling</b>		
<b>Strategy to Scale</b>		
1. Scaling	20	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
1. Resources and Management	25	23
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>96</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 2: 84.411B

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

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 10

#### Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

#### Strengths:

The project addresses Absolute Priority 3, fostering knowledge and promoting the development of students' academic literacy proficiency and aptitude for social-emotional learning (p.22). The applicant proposes to provide evidence-based professional learning to 600 teachers of 9th and 10th grade students to increase academic literacy proficiency and social-emotional learning skills for approximately 25,000 students. The project will build on and expand on the Reading Apprenticeship (RA) intervention, an evidence-based intervention for increasing students' learning skills, particularly historically under-served students; provide effective professional learning for teachers; and evaluate the intervention's effectiveness in rural settings. The applicant summarizes prior research that demonstrates that RA builds students' opportunities to collaborate with peers, abilities to persevere through challenging tasks, belief that effort contributes to growth, and literacy skills. This project will examine the impact of high school students' beliefs, confidence and self-regulation and meta-cognition on academic outcomes, specifically in rural settings. The applicant reports that little research has been conducted in this area and that schools have less access and demonstrate a need for evidence-based PD (p.26).

#### Weaknesses:

none noted

Reader's Score: 10

### 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: 23

Sub

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

**Strengths:**

The goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable. A logic model is included (p.6). The model has 2 inputs which are the RA intervention and their PD model which includes facilitation development. Teacher and student outcomes are detailed, and two distal outcomes are included reflecting the desired outcomes. The applicant has developed five goals to align with their logic model. Each goal is broken down into objectives and the desired outcomes and how they will be measured and documented (p.28).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) 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 designed to meet the identified needs of the targeted group. The project will address three areas of challenge by providing professional development to improve teacher quality in the 50 focus districts. These challenges are based upon the data that demonstrates that there are large disparities in high school students' literacy and science outcomes, district staff has limited access to high-quality, effective professional learning for teachers, and there are limited opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles that support retention (p.30). The applicant reports that research over the past 15 years has demonstrated that the Reading Apprenticeship intervention has had a positive impact on non-cognitive outcomes: students' literacy outcomes. The reported studies were conducted with students who faced similar challenges to the students served by this project, including those entering 9th grade two to five years below grade level. The other reported need is that currently only 80% of high school teachers in low-wealth districts are fully certified, and all teachers lack access to high-quality professional learning (p.31).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

**Strengths:**

The project will utilize a research-based intervention (RA) and proposes to conduct new research on the effects of the intervention on improving students' social-emotional development in rural, low wealth settings. The applicant will utilize matching funds from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) during the 1st year, to refine and develop formative assessment tools focused on social-emotional outcomes (p.32).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Sub**

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant proposes to increase the efficiency by utilizing current WestEd staff and participant time by drawing upon previous success of the RA intervention and streamlining the PD. Previous RA interventions that had significant impact on student outcomes required 10 days of face-to-face PD in discipline-specific groups, plus additional classroom coaching. The applicant will attempt to achieve comparable impacts with fewer days by identifying the highest leverage content and professional learning activities to be share based on prior interventions with RA. They will also build capacity with respect to PD by increasing access to teacher collaboration and expert support by providing online professional learning communities (PLCs) and virtual coaching. They will also test a small-group coaching model rather than using a one-on-one coaching approach, enabling substantial cross-disciplinary interactions focused on classroom practice in less time and fewer in-person trips to individual districts. (p.33)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant did not provide sufficient detail on how they will identify the high leverage items that will be the focus for the PD for this project. The PD is a significant component of this proposal so without identifying these items the response cannot be fully evaluated.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Scaling - Strategy to Scale**

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

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 identifies four barriers that that have in the past prevented the applicant from reaching the level of scale they have proposed for their project. They report on each barrier and provide citations to support the presence of the barrier and then detail how they will address each barrier. The barriers include lack of funding that hampers teachers' access to PD, high turnover rates of teachers, the remoteness of some districts, lack of support for classroom implementation, and sustainability (p.34-36).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 10**

Sub

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant will build upon its strong existing network to disseminate information about the project. Current networks include projects and centers that serve teachers, districts, state education agencies and policy makers nationally as well as their strong educator networks, websites, publications, and social media presence. They report that presently the RA website has about 3,000 users per month. The applicant will also share results through their fee-for-service contracts. They report that they had reached 2,500 educators through their \$1.6 million contracts with LEAs during fiscal year 2019. They intend to prepare three peer-reviewed articles, info graphics, blogs, and a policy brief. They will attend professional conferences to present preliminary findings to ensure that both researchers and practitioners have access to what is learned from the evaluation about program impacts as well as results of their scaling of RA in rural North Carolina. (p.16) They will also conduct outreach activities through their current contracts with Regional Education Labs, Comprehensive Centers, and technical assistance projects.

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan**

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

**Reader's Score: 23**

Sub

1. (1) 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 includes a detailed description of their personnel organization that will serve this project. They describe their roles and pertinent backgrounds and complete vitas are included as well as the details of the partners who will collaborate with them on this project. The project team includes literacy, staff development, and evaluation experts with an extensive background of bringing teacher professional learning interventions to scale, working in partnership with regional and local education leaders. The project director and lead evaluator have collaborated on several large randomized controlled trials previously and the applicant's staff has relevant experience working with rural districts and educators to improve literacy teaching and learning. They will be utilizing their product, RA, that was founded in 1995 and they will draw upon the partnerships built during the tenure of the RA intervention. They intend to build on existing facilitation guides, social-emotional learning resources, and online courses built in their Canvas learning management system (p.40).

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 10**

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The costs for the project are reasonable in relation to their overall project design. They will utilize RA which will not require any additional expenses relating to purchasing a curriculum or hiring any additional staff. They cite evidence of the cost effectiveness of their RA product based upon past utilization of RA. The applicant estimates that the costs per student for this project will be approximately \$240/student, excluding evaluation costs.

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides details on what they perceive as the potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends based on other funding sources they have access to presently and include letters of support to demonstrate the commitment of education leaders: County Superintendents, three Regional Education Service Alliances (RESA) serving most of the state's rural districts, the Association of North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals, and the North Carolina School Superintendents Association. They will develop a cadre of facilitators to lead the PD who will become part of WestEd's national network of certified facilitators so that local districts will not have to pay travel costs for experts to come to them and can schedule PD more quickly that fits local schedules and contexts. They state that by achieving success with students, engaging stakeholders at multiple levels in the state, and disseminating information about the project that participating districts will continue to invest in professional learning by leveraging resources such as North Carolina's Innovative Partnership Grants and Comprehensive State Literacy Development grants which will contribute heavily towards the continued support of the project. (p.42)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not provide enough detail about the future funding they identify to address the sustainability of the project beyond the grant period.

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 4. (4) 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.**

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides details of the management plan they will put in place to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. They include a detailed chart which includes a timeline of activities, measurable objectives, and responsibilities (p.43). They include a detailed schedule of implementation of the proposed PD. The management staff will meet at least every other week prior to the launch of professional development to ensure that the project is on-track. Once the PD begins the Leadership and Evaluation teams will meet monthly to ensure that the project stays on time and on budget and at least 3 times per year, the Leadership Team will meet with the evaluators to discuss findings that can shape upcoming professional learning and local support structures. Once the project starts the project leaders and financial analysts will meet quarterly with WestEd's Program Services team to review three areas of project quality: Contracts and Legal; Project Staffing, Quality Assurance, and Data Security; and Financial (p.42).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 5**

**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: 20**

**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 this notice).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant will conduct a two-year cluster-randomized control trial to estimate the effect of Reading Apprenticeship on teacher practice and student outcomes to provide evidence that will meet WWC Evidence Standards without reservations (p.44). The applicant will recruit 50 rural, low-wealth districts in North Carolina and will randomly assign half of the districts into treatment (receiving Reading Apprenticeship training SY2021-22 and SY2022- 23) and half into control (business-as-usual condition during SY2021-22 and SY2022-23 and receiving the training in SY2023-24 and SY2024-25). The randomization will be blocked by region and prior achievement to ensure the treatment and control groups are balanced across contexts and that teacher leaders are evenly distributed throughout the state to improve program sustainability. The evaluation design includes outcomes on two clustered levels of participants: teachers and students. All data will be collected and analyzed in accordance with WWC standards, including the use of baseline data to check for equivalence, similar collection across treatment and control conditions, and the use of Hierarchical Linear Models to reduce the risk of Type I error associated with clustered data. (p.44)



Sub

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 10**

2. (2) 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 applicant includes two detailed charts to illustrate the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as their measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. They include an evaluation activity timeline, annual measurable district-level thresholds of implementation fidelity by key project component, definition thresholds, and data sources. In the first two years they will assess the fidelity of program implementation in all treatment districts, providing regular updates to WestEd and local program staff to inform continuous improvement. They have set minimum annual thresholds for engagement on components of implementation fidelity. They hypothesize that Reading Apprenticeship training and supports for teachers and teacher leaders will result in changes in teacher practice and that the new practices will lead to students' improved learning strategies and improved academic mindsets. They further hypothesize that the Improved instruction, student learning strategies, and student academic mindsets will mediate the two distal outcomes they identified: improved student academic behaviors and (p.46).

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly demonstrates that their methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on the relevant outcomes of the project. They include descriptions of the valid, reliable measures to be utilized that are aligned to their program logic model. They intend to demonstrate that Improved instruction and students' improved learning strategies and academic mindsets will improve students' completion in history, science and whether and improved behavior in the area of student attendance.

**Weaknesses:**

none noted

**Reader's Score: 5**

---

**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 07/31/2020 10:22 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2020 02:29 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	22
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Scaling</b>		
<b>Strategy to Scale</b>		
1. Scaling	20	9
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
1. Resources and Management	25	23
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>82</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 2: 84.411B

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

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 8

#### Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

#### Strengths:

The narrative adequately (p. 3) documents that rural North Carolina students score significantly lower than students in non-rural areas, even more than in other states, particularly in the area of reading. The narrative (p. 3) also adequately indicates that low-wealth high school students in NC graduate at a rate 8 percentage points lower than those in higher-wealth communities. The narrative (p. 3) adequately indicates that positive social-emotional factors lead to greater success in life, as does proficiency in literacy. The narrative adequately indicates that the proposed program is intended to increase student outcomes, such as grades, attendance, course completion, and high school graduation for 9th and 10th grade students. The Supreme Court of North Carolina has recognized the need to improve the education of students in low-wealth districts in the state. In response, an Action Plan developed by the applicant under the court order determined that teachers in these North Carolina districts lack professional development (p. 12). The project will adequately provide multi-tiered training for teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators, in an attempt to increase teacher retention in North Carolina (p. 16).

#### Weaknesses:

The potential of the proposed project to increase knowledge is weak to the extent that the literacy program being studied has already been well-documented for effectiveness and therefore the additional knowledge to the field will pertain only to the application in rural areas and the development of an assessment tool for SEL (pp. 12-12).

Reader's Score: 8

### 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: 22

Sub

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

**Strengths:**

Goals, objectives, and outcomes are presented with clarity and adequately align with one another (pp 8 – 10).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) 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 logic model (p. 7) adequately provides proximal outcomes for teachers and proximal and distal outcomes for students. The proposed project appears designed to support high school teachers and to lead to positive outcomes, both academic and SEL, for students.

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

**Strengths:**

The application adequately describes the tools that will be used for assessing SEL and processes for using them (p. 11-12).

**Weaknesses:**

The application is weak in describing an addition to an ongoing line of inquiry that is substantial (pp. 11-12), given that the literacy program being implemented has already been documented to be effective.

Reader's Score: 2

4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.

**Strengths:**

The project describes an efficiency which will be to provide greater online support and group, rather than individual, coaching (p. 13).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 5

### Scaling - Strategy to Scale

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

Reader's Score: 9

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 proposal adequately describes how the program will overcome barriers to time allotted for teacher professional learning by spreading it out over two years (p. 15). The proposed project plans to combine districts in order to provide professional learning to districts that might be too small to provide it on their own (p.15).

**Weaknesses:**

The initiative's plan to address barriers to scale appear weak because it describes steps that are already well in-place in many initiatives, such as allocating more time for professional development over two years and pooling teachers from multiple districts (p. 15).

Reader's Score: 5

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

**Strengths:**

The proposal adequately explains the array of staff, resources, and programs that WestEd has to disseminate its work (p. 16).

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal does not address specifics about how information from this particular project will be disseminated (p. 21).

Reader's Score: 4

### Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

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

**Reader's Score: 23**

**Sub**

- 1. (1) 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 agency has adequately identified a team of qualified staff members to lead and implement the project, most of whom have experience with the Reading Apprenticeship model (pp. 18-19 and appendix with resumes). The organization is well-established and has a track record of success in many educational initiatives (p. 17).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The budget is reasonable and the budget justification clearly explains expenses (Appendix).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

**Strengths:**

The project includes a training-the-trainer model which appears appropriate to enabling the state to continue to provide teacher professional development after the project's termination (p. 12, p. 21).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

- 4. (4) 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:**

A strength of the application is that it adequately provides objectives and staff responsibilities (p. 23).

**Weaknesses:**

The timeline is labeled as having measurable objectives, but measurable objectives are not present (p. 23).

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

**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: 20

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 this notice).**

**Strengths:**

The plan to use a cluster-randomized control model to evaluate the project, is adequate to meet the WWC standards (pp. 24-25).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) 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 evaluation plan is adequately tied to the logic model as well as goals and objectives (p. 24 and Appendix). Key components, mediators, and outcomes will be addressed (p. 23, p. 26).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

**Strengths:**

The evaluators adequately plan to use outcome measures recommended by IES (p. 27). The evaluation plan is appropriate for producing useful and appropriate data (pp. 27 – 30 and Appendix).

**Weaknesses:**

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/31/2020 02:29 PM



Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/26/2020 09:16 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	7
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	17
<b>Sub Total</b>	35	24
<b>Scaling</b>		
<b>Strategy to Scale</b>		
1. Scaling	20	16
<b>Sub Total</b>	20	16
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
1. Resources and Management	25	21
<b>Sub Total</b>	25	21
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	17
<b>Sub Total</b>	20	17
<b>Total</b>	100	78

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 2: 84.411B

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

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 7

#### Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

#### Strengths:

The program is effectively designed around existing literature on the impact of Reading Apprenticeship (Form ED) and has the potential to expand access to the program for high-need students and districts (p. 22), which is a strength. Reading Apprenticeship is one strategy for helping students achieve reading proficiency to prepare them for the demands of content courses as well as building SEL to help rural students build more capacity in "people skills" (p. 23).

#### Weaknesses:

It seems that the project will not result in anything new, necessarily, which means that the potential contribution is fairly small; this project appears to be the implementation of work we already know is effective for a population of students currently not experiencing the results of the intervention. However, the focus on rural students does add to a smaller body of literature (p. 24).

Reader's Score: 7

### 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: 17

#### Sub

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

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The goals and objectives are specified and measurable as outlined on page 28. One strength in the design is that it integrates both SEL and literacy as a means of building capacity in both. This area is a strength because these areas do not grow independent of one another; they are mutually-informing (Form ED). The goals related to measurement are appropriate for the project as outlined on page 28.

**Weaknesses:**

Objective 1.2 states that “WestEd will develop and refine formative assessment tools and processes for using them in the classroom that will support teachers in integrating RA routines into their teaching during the first two years of the project,” but it is not clear how the formation of these tools function into the goal of increasing the number of teachers who have participated (p. 28). Further, it is unclear how such tools will be implemented and assessed beyond the scope of the professional development. Thus, the lack of clarity here is a weakness.

**Reader's Score: 8**

2. **(2) 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 needs of the specific population can be addressed. Students in rural areas are not experiencing the benefits of the reader apprenticeship model, and faculty are not provided with the professional development opportunities to build their practice as outlined on page 28. This is a strength of the proposal because providing rural-based school district teachers with professional development that fits their context is critical to ensuring that pedagogical approaches are adopted and sustained (p. 29).

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal rests on an assumption that is not measured as part of the proposal: “Reading Apprenticeship asks high school teachers to make substantial shifts in how their classrooms typically operate” (p. 35). The proposal notes that “rather than lecturing,” faculty will engage in modeling “how to learn from texts and have students use similar routines individually and in small groups” (p. 27). The example provided is a science teacher modeling how to “interpret a graph to build understanding of a phenomenon, then has students use the same approach to interpret other graphs” (p. 27). The example provided in support of the assertion is not an example of lecturing: The proposers seem to assume that teaching graph interpretation is traditionally handled via lecture: Telling students about modeling a graph without actually demonstrating the process of modeling. The assumptions underpinning the assertions seem flawed and are also not subject to measurement within the scope of the problem. Assuming that teachers are not employing modeling and a student-led learning process without measuring is problematic, which is a weakness.

**Reader's Score: 2**

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

**Strengths:**

The program will contribute to the ongoing research related to implementing reading apprenticeship and, in particular, application of the model in a rural context (p.28). This choice is a strength given that it is in alignment with the recent Supreme Court of North Carolina decision about the disparity among school districts (p.31), evidence of its connection to an ongoing need and position in a constellation of initiatives meant to address disparity.

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

The creation of additional formative tools is useful in this context; at the same time, additional discussion about how such tools “builds students’ agency” would be helpful to clarify the ways in which these tools will constitute a “substantial” addition to the research” (p. 33).

**Reader's Score: 3**

4. **(4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

**Strengths:**

The program aims to condense professional development for rural teachers by focusing on an integrated approach that permits consolidation (p. 28), which is a strength because professional development can be costly, particularly in outlying areas. Additionally, online options will be available, and small-group coaching as opposed to 1:1 coaching will be included. This approach can lead to increased efficiency, which is a strength.

**Weaknesses:**

Additional specificity is needed in this area, as the direct savings are not illuminated. It can be assumed that online instruction/support will save time and money, but specific accounting for the hypothesized amount of savings would be helpful to strengthen the proposal (p. 29).

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Scaling - Strategy to Scale**

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

**Reader's Score: 16**

**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:**

Reading apprenticeship is a well-researched area of literacy, and the barriers demonstrated can be addressed through the proposal (p. 34). The identified barriers to scaling include access to professional development, and the proposal plans to mitigate the challenge by providing small-group coaching and leveraging online offerings for teacher leadership.

**Weaknesses:**

Funding is a significant barrier, and no future resources are currently lined up (Appendix D). Additionally, some of the barriers are extra-institutional in nature; the impact of poverty cannot be underestimated. Finally, typically PD brings together 20 faculty participants (p. 35). The proposal calls for bringing together faculty across districts given the lower number of faculty in 9th and 10th grades in rural districts. While a good opportunity to engage teachers across district lines, building in enough time for faculty to discuss specific school-related contexts will be critical, and that opportunity to not outlined in the proposal. Additionally, a barrier includes high turnover in teaching, which

**Sub**

impedes sustainability of innovations. The proposed solutions for the barrier do not directly line up: How will adding support for one teacher leader and “multiple leadership layers” (p. 36) help reduce turnover? The proposal states that these interventions will “mitigate these effects by encouraging teachers to remain in the profession and in their districts” (p. 36).

**Reader's Score: 7**

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

**Strengths:**

The program will include dissemination via academic conferences and journals, along with professional organizations and the West Ed network (p. 37).

**Weaknesses:**

The application did not include the specific academic conferences that would serve as the appropriate venue for dissemination, which is a weakness. More specificity in this area is needed.

**Reader's Score: 9**

**Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan**

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

**Reader's Score: 21**

**Sub**

**1. (1) 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:**

Personnel are qualified through academic and experiential credentials. The PI has a PhD with experience in grant oversight. The evaluation lead and other team members have the appropriate research and grant experience to carry out the project (p. 38).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

**2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

Sub

**Strengths:**

Direct program costs seem reasonable given that RA “does not require the purchase of curriculum or hiring of additional staff as do many other interventions” (p. 40). This is an area of strength because it promotes long-term sustainability.

**Weaknesses:**

Salaries appear to be on the high side for the scope of the project. This is a weakness given that the project itself can be implemented with lower cost by its very nature (p. 165).

**Reader's Score: 4**

3. (3) **The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

**Strengths:**

Attachment 7 includes several letters of support for the proposal and a current match, which indicates the potential for future support and sustainability.

**Weaknesses:**

No funds for future delivery are actually in-hand, despite statements of support for the program. Current budget matches are for year one only (Appendix G).

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. (4) **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:**

All objectives and goals are clear and manageable. Within the grant period, work can be completed as articulated. The leadership team will plan to meet on a routine basis to ensure work is on track and that milestones are met (p. 42).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

**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: 17**

Sub

1. (1) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce**

**Sub**

**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 this notice).**

**Strengths:**

Each goal includes an appropriate set of objectives and measures: Using classroom observation, teacher logs, and interviews are effective means of gathering data for analysis. (p. 44). Hierarchical Lineal Models can help eliminate some of the challenges associated with the potential for false positives (p. 45), which is a strength.

**Weaknesses:**

The evaluation of the intervention rest on the idea that teachers are not already “decreasing front of the room lecture” (p. 46), yet there is no baseline measurement for assessing the reality of current classrooms.

**Reader's Score: 8**

- 2. (2) 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:**

All items are articulated clearly. Appendix I-4 also outlines student and teacher outcomes that are aligned with the RA program and can provide additional data. Data sources are provided to support threshold decisions (p. 46), which is a strength.

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

Use of RCT and additional measures will demonstrate the efficacy of the program (p. 45). Randomization is a strength because it minimizes the impact of bias.

**Weaknesses:**

Because the assumption is that teachers are not already using modeling or application-based instruction, the measures might not provide as much evidence as expected. The baseline observations could influence the strength of the observed effect (p. 149).

**Reader's Score: 4**

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/26/2020 09:16 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2020 12:03 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Scaling</b>		
<b>Strategy to Scale</b>		
1. Scaling	20	13
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
1. Resources and Management	25	22
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	18
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>



# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 2: 84.411B

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

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 8

#### Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

#### Strengths:

The proposed project expands on development and implementation of the Reading Apprenticeship (RA) program which has good prior evidence of impact on student academic achievement and social and emotional learning (p22). The applicant presents a strong argument for the importance of the skills that RA is designed to develop (p23) and related needs in North Carolina (p23). In addition to providing additional evidence about the impact of RA, the study proposes to build knowledge of the “the impact of high school students’ beliefs, confidence and self-regulation and metacognition on academic outcomes” (p25). This question about the mediating effect of SEL outcomes to academic learning outcomes is an important contribution.

#### Weaknesses:

Since testing the impact of RA is presented as a primary evaluation question (p44), the significance section would be strengthened if more information were provided about how this impact evaluation differs from and/or builds on prior impact evaluations. Also, it seems like the project enhancements of formative assessment tools and new approaches for delivering professional learning (described in the project design section) and developing knowledge about their effectiveness ought to be highlighted as contributions in the significance section.

Reader's Score: 8

### 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

Sub

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

**Strengths:**

Goals and objectives are clearly specified (pp 28-29) and are well aligned with the project logic model (p27). Outcomes area also clearly specified and measurable (pp 28-29).

**Weaknesses:**

The counts of teachers and students to be served are inconsistent (500 teachers/ 30,000 students on p17 and 600 teachers/25,000 students on pp 19 and 22). Also, I would like to have seen explanation of the domains that are measured by the end-of-course exams in English II and Biology (mentioned on p30 and p47). Objective 4.3 (p30) describes improvement of “literacy assessment outcomes,” which seems like an incomplete description of what these end-of-course exams measure.

**Reader's Score:** 9

2. (2) **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 project focuses on addressing the need to improve high school student literacy and science outcomes, teacher access to professional learning, and teacher opportunities to take leadership roles (p 31). Needs in each of these areas are well articulated (pp 31-32) and strategies for addressing them are reasonable.

**Weaknesses:**

There is not a strong justification for the focus on science achievement (or the lack of focus on mathematics achievement). Additional information on student needs related to this outcome should be provided.

**Reader's Score:** 4

3. (3) **The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

**Strengths:**

The proposed project builds on prior successful impact studies and expands implementation to a setting where there is significant need (p32). The applicant also proposes to incorporate development of formative assessment tools for assessing student social emotional learning (p32-33).

**Weaknesses:**

The rationale for including formative assessment tools focused on social-emotional outcomes is described as “teachers sometimes report they need more tools. . . . to assess progress and respond to students” (p32). Since this is positioned as a primary addition to RA, the need for and purpose of these tools could be better elaborated. Given that there are several prior impact studies of RA, the argument for a strong program of research and development would be strengthened by clarifying how the elements of present proposal builds on prior work for the purpose of improving the intervention and contributing to knowledge.

**Reader's Score:** 3

4. (4) **The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

Cost effectiveness is proposed by developing and implementing a more streamlined version of RA that was implemented previously, integrating training on multiple topics, using online professional learning communities, using virtual and small-group coaching, and focusing on the highest-leverage content and professional learning activities (p33). These approaches suggest less cost than prior RA implementation.

**Weaknesses:**

In addition to discussing how to implement RA more cost-effectively, it would be compelling to discuss how the provision of RA (through a more streamlined approach) would be more cost effective than what a district or school would otherwise do in its absence. Also, the plan to focus on the highest-leverage content and professional learning activities (p33) seems reasonable, but it's not clear how those activities will be identified. If there is no strong basis for identifying them, I would be concerned that the reduced version of the intervention may be less effective.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Scaling - Strategy to Scale**

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

**Reader's Score: 13**

**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:**

Four barriers are clearly specified along with reasonable strategies to address each (pp 34-35).

**Weaknesses:**

The first barrier about districts not being able to afford professional learning is proposed to be addressed through funding provided by the EIR grant, additional private grant funds, and plans for future contributions (pp34-35). These seem to be short-term solutions. A stronger argument here might focus on how professional learning could be made more affordable or provision of additional assurances that long-term funding will be available. Barrier 3 is not clearly explained ("support for classroom implementation through formative assessment tools") (p 35). Is the barrier that teachers have trouble making so many shifts in their practice? That they face challenges implementing? The problem that the formative assessment tools are intended to solve should be made more clear.

**Reader's Score: 6**

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

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a comprehensive plan for disseminating lessons learned through the study to practitioners who lead implementation of RA and other practitioners served through networks and projects led by the applicant (pp36-37). Evaluation staff will prepare peer-reviewed articles, other publications, and present findings at

**Sub**

conferences.

**Weaknesses:**

The plan for dissemination to practitioners is better developed than the plan to share findings with policy and researcher audiences (p36). Additional information is needed about what is expected to be shared with these latter audiences, for what purpose, and how.

**Reader's Score: 7**

**Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan**

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

**Reader's Score: 22**

**Sub**

- 1. (1) 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 capacity of the applicant organizations and their personnel is very strong (pp 37-40). Roles and responsibilities of key personnel are also clearly described (pp38-39).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant argues that RA's cost is reasonable relative to interventions that require additional personnel, materials, or facilities (p40), which is appropriate. Mention of long-term impacts via teachers who continue to use RA approaches (p40) also suggests that costs are reasonable.

**Weaknesses:**

The arguments for reasonableness of the costs (pp40-41) do not include contributions of the project to improving the intervention or contributing to new knowledge. Including those benefits would create a stronger argument.

**Reader's Score: 4**

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides evidence of strong support from various local stakeholders and that suggests that continued support will be fostered by building local capacity in the form of local certified RA facilitators and a regional RA coordinator (p41). These both suggest potential for continued support.

**Weaknesses:**

Additional information about the potential for continued funding support is needed, including demonstrations of commitment (pp40-41).

**Reader's Score:** 3

4. (4) **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 well conceptualized involving appropriate structures and timelines for communicating among project staff and for carrying out project activities. The timelines and milestones are appropriate (pp21-22).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score:** 5

**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:** 18

**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 this notice).**

**Strengths:**

The evaluation plan demonstrates a good understanding of WWC standards and an approach with potential to meet standards without reservations (pp44-50).

**Weaknesses:**

Justification for the reasonableness of the various estimated minimum detectable effect sizes of .16 and .17 (pp50 and 156-157) should be provided—specifically, whether prior studies of RA and/or similar interventions have prior studies demonstrated effects of these magnitudes.

**Reader's Score:** 8

Sub

2. (2) 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:**

Key project components, mediators, and outcomes are well articulated as are plans for their analyses (pp. 148-161). Measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation are provided and focus on participation in and the quality of professional learning activities (pp152-153).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

A comprehensive set of outcome measures for teachers and students is identified, along with information about measure reliability and validity (pp47-49, 154-155).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/31/2020 12:03 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2020 09:41 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	22
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Scaling</b>		
<b>Strategy to Scale</b>		
1. Scaling	20	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
<b>Resources and Quality of Management Plan</b>		
1. Resources and Management	25	21
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	18
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 2: 84.411B

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

Applicant: WestEd (S411B200016)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 10

#### Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

#### Strengths:

The application provides adequate detail to indicate that the proposed project would likely make a significant contribution to increase knowledge or understanding of education problems. It refers to employing a Reading Apprenticeship (RA) professional development/instructional program, which satisfies Absolute Priority 1 (moderate evidence, with sources cited). And the application provides statistics about the need to be addressed, that is, significant educational disparities between students in rural, low-income areas versus other students in North Carolina. For instance, the difference between 4th and 8th grade reading scores in North Carolina is less than that of all but 2 other states. The application states that the RA program is designed to help resolve this, and that the proposed project would help build knowledge about RA in rural areas of North Carolina; to resolve the lack of such knowledge (pp. 22-26).

#### Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 10

### 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: 22

#### Sub

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



**Sub**

**Strengths:**

The application provides project goals, objectives, and outcomes that are clearly specified and measurable; it includes a table (Exhibit 3) that summarizes 5 goals, with a range of 2-3 objectives for each goal; also, there are detailed descriptions of several corresponding measures and documentation. Outcomes in terms of teacher leaders, teachers, and students are illustrated through a logic model in Exhibit 2 (pp. 27-30).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

**2. (2) 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 for the most part is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the target population, as the goals and objectives pertain to the problem that the application indicated needed to be met: disproportional educational gaps among rural, low-income grade school students in North Carolina (pp. 28-30).

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not provide sufficient detail about the North Carolina Supreme Court case upon which the action plan pertains to. In particular, there is no brief description of the case so as to better understand the context by which the project's design is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population (p. 30).

**Reader's Score: 4**

**3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

**Strengths:**

The application provides adequate detail to illustrate that the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field: The proposed activities are part of an action plan that the applicant organization has been appointed to by the North Carolina Supreme Court; the plan's execution is to ensure compliance with one of the Court's decisions, whereby it was determined that students in low-income districts were denied equal opportunity to receive a sound education. Such a plan would necessitate sustained research and development (pp 30-31).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

**4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

**Strengths:**

The application provides partial detail regarding the extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, money, and other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity. For instance, it refers to having a flexible design whereby it would not require as many separate trainings and training days; also, accomplishing more in fewer days (p. 33).

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not provide adequate detail regarding the extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, money, and other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity. For instance, it does not provide detail as to the extent of any other cost effective factors beyond not having to do as many separate trainings and accomplishing more in fewer days (p. 33).

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Scaling - Strategy to Scale**

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

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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 clearly identifies specific strategies that address 4 barriers to reaching the level of scale proposed. For instance, the application describe a strategy to budget fully for facilitation, teacher, and travel costs, so as to address the barrier of rural low-wealth school districts not able to afford professional learning. This strategy to barrier type of approach is similarly specified for the other 3 barriers (pp. 34-36).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

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

**Strengths:**

The application identifies several mechanisms that would be used to broadly disseminate information about the project to support further development/replication. For instance, the application refers to a sharing information via professional development offerings promoted to a national cadres of over 70 certified RA facilitators; the website and social media of the applicant organization and its partners; and several conference where the evaluation team can present findings (pp. 37-38).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan**

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

Reader's Score: 21

Sub

1. (1) 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 application clearly provides detail to illustrate the applicant's capacity to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level. The application refers to the applicant having demonstrated capacity for large-scale operations, such as over 2,600 contracts dealing with national R&D resources, and projected funding of \$174 million in 2020 (p. 37).

**Weaknesses:**

None

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

**Strengths:**

The costs generally are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The application describes achieving a minimal cost of \$240 per student, based on schools not having to pay as much for program personnel, travel, and any other relevant costs that may be incurred with other third-party programs (pp. 40-41).

**Weaknesses:**

None

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

**Strengths:**

The application partially provides detail to illustrate the potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends. The application highlights wide stakeholder support for the proposed project, ranging from regional/statewide educational associations, such as the North Carolina School Superintendents Association, to three Regional Education Service Alliances serving most of the state's rural school districts. This is affirmed by corresponding support letters enclosed with the application (pp. 41-42).

**Sub**

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not provide adequate detail about potential funding sources when Federal funding would end; not enough detail about potential non-Federal grants and/or fee-for-services (pp. 41-42).

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. **(4) 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 application for the most part provides detail to demonstrate that the management plan is adequate to achieve the objectives of the proposed project, on time and within budget. For instance, the application specifies a timeline, budget, activities, and responsibilities in Appendix 1-2 (p. 42).

**Weaknesses:**

The application narrative does not clearly refer to Exhibit 5, which pertains to a timeline of activities, objectives, and responsibilities (p. 43).

**Reader's Score: 4**

**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: 18**

**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 this notice).**

**Strengths:**

The application provides clear sufficient detail to illustrate that the evaluation methods would, if well implemented, produce evidence about project effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations. For instance, the application states that the evaluation would entail the use of a 2-year randomized control trial to estimate RA's effect on teacher practice and student outcomes. This would minimize sample bias (pp. 44-45).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 10**

2. **(2) 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 application’s evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, plus an acceptable implementation threshold. For instance, the application highlights a timeline for the evaluation that factors in recruitment, randomization, data collection, and reporting; also, thresholds for implementation fidelity (pp. 44-46, Exhibit 5, and Appendix I-4).

**Weaknesses:**

None

**Reader's Score: 5**

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

**Strengths:**

The application for the most part provides adequate detail to demonstrate that overall the evaluation methods will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes. For instance, the application refers to participating students being identified prior to randomization by referring to the districts’ 8th and 9th grade student rosters for spring 2021, to prevent bias from in-moving students (pp. 45-47).

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not provide adequate detail regarding the extent of reducing the risk of the other types of bias in connection with randomized control trial, besides reducing bias from in-moving students by referring to districts’ 8th and 9th grade rosters for spring 2021 (pp. 45-47).

**Reader's Score: 3**

---

**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 07/31/2020 09:41 AM