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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)
Reader #1:   **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	45	44
Sub Total	45	44
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	30	30
Sub Total	30	30
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
Sub Total	25	25
Priority Questions		
CPP		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. SEA Partnership	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Total	105	104

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 44

> **Sub**

> 1. **(1) The extent to which professional learning funded through the stipend will replace existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers at the following levels:**

> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Less than 20%- 0 points | 20%- 5 points |
> | 40%- 10 points | 60%- 15 points |
> | 80%- 20 points | 100%-25 points |

> **Strengths:**

> The applicant provides sufficient evidence to support the extent to which professional learning funded through the stipend will replace existing mandatory professional levels by 100%. The applicant clearly identifies the current method used to measure professional development and the stipend supported measure of determining teacher's competency. The applicant also provides a clear timetable of how the transition of methods will occur (e27-e28).

> **Weaknesses:**

> No weaknesses found.

> **Reader's Score:** 25

2. **(2) The adequacy of plans to ensure that stipends are appropriately used for high-quality professional learning.**

> **Strengths:**

> The applicant adequately identifies the plans to ensure the stipends are appropriately used for high-quality professional learning. The applicant provides substantial details of how the stipend will support high quality professional learning through school stakeholders collaborating to ensure project alignment with school priorities, a micro-credentials platform with security, ease of use and assessment rigor The applicant also provides the goal of following grant and government specifications. The project will also provide data from teacher developed learning contracts will become evidence of alignment of the educators learning. (e29).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will offer teachers flexibility and autonomy regarding the extent of the choice teachers have in selecting their professional learning.**

Strengths:

The applicant's proposed project adequately offers teachers flexibility and autonomy in choice of professional learning. The applicant offers over 500 micro-credentials in their Digital Promise system. Examples of the options provided are webinars, podcasts and interviews. The applicant also plans to provide teachers flexibility through control over the content of their learning contracts, the timing of when they work, and evidence used to demonstrate competency (e30-e31).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

4. **(4) The likelihood that the procedures and resources for teachers result in a simple process to select or request professional learning based on their professional learning needs and those identified needs of high-need students.**

Strengths:

It is highly likely procedures and resources for teachers presented by the applicant will result in a simplified process to meet their professional needs and the needs of high need students. Examples are provided by the applicant through the establishment and use of the Digital Promise system. It is their online professional learning community for sharing learning opportunities among and for teachers. Using the template, teachers identify micro-credentials and supporting resources needed to address their learning needs, estimate a timeframe for completion, and over time, determine the competency requirements of the micro-credential and select the artifacts that will demonstrate competency. ETL will work with teachers to write learning contracts that address teacher-identified learning needs, approve the learning contract, and prepare teachers to successfully complete micro-credentials. To finish the cycle, teachers implement their learning contracts and submit evidence to the Digital Promise micro-credential platform. The proposed project provides teacher support through the entire process. (e31, Appendix I).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

This applicant has sufficiently detailed how the goals, objectives and outcomes will be achieved with measurable examples. Goal 1 for the applicant's proposed project is facilitate an empowering and transformative community of teacher-directed professional learners in 20 western NC middle schools serving 6-8th grade. Objective 1B is correlated with this goal and states the applicant's plan to increase ownership and use of professional learning on the school level. The one of the outcomes expected for this goal by the applicant is to see an increase in the percentage of teachers reporting an increase in relevance of learning experiences in TDPL over traditional professional development (e32-e34).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant could increase the strength of their application with exact numbers of the percentage in several of the noted outcomes, such as teacher's relevance of learning experience in TDPL over traditional professional development, satisfaction with the ETL stipend process, passing of micro-credentials and self-efficacy. There is a tentative treatment group of 250 teachers and a traditional group of 250 teachers noted by the applicant. The exact number of the percentage of teachers is needed to determine whether there has been an increase in the desired change or response from sample teachers to determine whether the applicant has truly met their set goals and objectives (e32-34,e50-51).

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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

1. **(1) The sufficiency of the stipend amount to enable professional learning funded through the stipend to replace a significant portion of existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers.**

   Strengths:

   This applicant provides sufficient evidence of the stipend amount's ability to enable professional learning funded through the stipend to replace a significant portion of existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers. The funding replaces the current professional development with flexible and autonomous training. The existing mandatory professional development requires funds for the expense of substitutes, facilitator and travel with educators. It has allotted teachers a minimal voice in their professional development. With teachers receiving self-selected professional development in the form of micro-credentials, podcasts, and instructional coaches, the allotted ██████ per teacher is more accessible, practical and sustainable (e35-36).

   Weaknesses:
   No weaknesses found.

   Reader's Score: 5

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

   Strengths:

   In relation to the objectives, design and the potential of the project, the applicant provides a sufficient connection to a reasonable cost. The applicant details the extent to which the costs are reasonable by examining the actual costs per student, as opposed to the entire grant budget. The teacher stipend costs are of greatest significance and represent an estimated cost of ██ per student per year. When additional costs such as personnel and grant administration expenses are factored in, the approximate cost of $164 per student is still reasonable. When compared to traditional professional development costs, which can average between ████████ per day plus substitute costs and travel costs for an external facilitator are more reasonable. The applicant emphasizes the ETL costs as comparable or better than traditional professional development cost , while offering teachers more flexibility and greater relevance while reducing time out of class (e32, e35-e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed payment structure will enable teachers to have an opportunity to apply for and use the stipend with minimal burden.**

Strengths:

This applicant sufficiently provided evidence of a proposed payment structure with the potential to enable teachers to apply and use the stipend with minimal burden. Examples of this efficiency are noted in the direct deposit options and staff support with documentation. The applicant provides four payments of ██ via direct deposit or regular mail after the Navigator system examines their completed work (e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

4. **(4) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

This project provides substantial evidence of the qualifications of key personal including their relevant training and experience. The Principal Investigator and Project Director have over 40 years of experience designing, developing and facilitating professional development for education including coaching in teacher directed learning environments (e38). The Principal Investigator has completed doctoral studies in Adult & Community College Education as well as Curriculum and Technology Studies. He has worked in higher education for over 30 years. The Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation has completed graduate studies in Global and International Education. She has also had over 20 years of research and evaluation experience (e69-e79).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides an adequate management plan to achieve the objective of the proposed project on time within budget. The applicant has developed a management team which includes the Assistant Director of Teacher Outreach and the External Evaluator. All team members roles are clearly defined. The Principal Investigators key responsibilities include general oversight of the project, partnership development with key external partners and monitoring of project objectives to ensure adequate progress. During Phase 1 (Jan 2021 – Dec 2021), the applicant details several project tasks with the titles of responsible team members. Examples include: hire staff to fill vacant support positions, initiate IRB review, recruit and confirm participation of schools/teachers participating in the study, random assignment of schools to ETL or control group, plans with school/district leadership to clarify grant objectives, define school/district areas of focus for teacher learning, and recruit/hire/train observers to administer CLASS instrument. Overall, the applicant has provided clear milestones which carry the plan to 2025 (e39-e43)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

6. **(6) The adequacy of procedures for leveraging the stipend program to inform continuous improvement and systematic changes to professional learning.**

   Strengths:

   The applicant refers to a document improvement model to support their plans of leveraging for improvement. This model has the potential to support the applicant's plans (e44).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses found.

   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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 25

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

   Strengths:

   The applicant sufficiently provides methods of evaluation about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook. The applicant provides examples from the WWC Handbook to show alignment with program and WWC expectations. The ETL project includes three progressive studies to monitor implementation, formative evaluation and summative impact. The research design is a cluster randomized control trial. The ETL program will be evaluated using an experimental design that meets the WWC standards without reservations by employing a cluster randomized controlled trial (RCT)
   with assignment at the school level. The units of analyses are teachers and students; however,
   student outcomes are a proxy for teacher performance. The treatment group will receive the
   ETL program intervention while the control group will participate in a business as usual
   (BAU) manner during the intervention phases of the project (Phases 2-4). The applicant has hypothesized that teachers in treatment schools will experience greater outcomes than those in the BAU
   schools, including teacher instructional practices and self-efficacy and student social-emotional
   and academic outcomes. Research question 1 will be addressed by the implementation evaluation and will include six components to monitor the ETL program's fidelity: 1) identifying confounds, 2) teacher recruitment, 3) teacher training, 4) data tracking and management, 5) ensuring teachers adhere to the study.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

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's evaluation plan provides exceptionally clear articulation of the key components, mediators and outcomes as well as measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

The key project components of the ETL program are: 1) teacher-identified needs
assessment, 2) learning contract, 3) micro-credentials, and 4) stipends. The ETL approach
consists of a TDPL intervention with the unit of delivery to teachers.

The mediators align to the ETL program and demonstrate a relationship with the impact evaluation outcomes as follows: 1) teacher professional learning, teacher seniority, teacher training, environmental collegiality; 2) teacher self-efficacy, school climate, student SEL, educator SEL PD,; student academic achievement, school staff collegiality, instructional climate, staff turnover, and educator self-efficacy. Mediators will be monitored as part of the formative evaluation.As part of the evaluation, teachers will be examined as to whether they met the measurable threshold for acceptable implementation, which consists of full completion of four key outcomes.

1) Complete a needs assessment prior to the intervention.
2) Complete and have approved the learning contract before the intervention.
3) Complete nine micro-credentials over three years in Phases 2-4.
4) Receive full stipends totaling ██████ per year for three years for a total of ██████
   (e45, e47-e48).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Strengths:

The methods of evaluation have potential to provide data sufficient to clearly articulate performance feedback and permit periodic assessment towards outcomes. Examples of these methods of evaluation are the applicant's use of the CLASS Assessment Scoring (e48, Table I). CLASS will evaluate the classroom environment and assess the quality of teacher social and instructional interactions with students (Pianta et al., 2012). The CLASS project offers a reliable, valid, and evidence-based approach to effective observation of classroom interactions. CLASS observers will complete the CLASS certification program, which will include an annual refresher to ensure inter-rater reliability. Observations will take place at the beginning and the end of the first academic year and at the end of the following academic years in all treatment and control classrooms. The applicant had made provision for continuous data collection of student demographic data, socioeconomic data, and academic data through questionnaires/instruments and an MOU with NCDPI; with their support, SQL reports will be deployed in participating LEAs to collect data from the Student Information System (SIS). District, school, and teacher data will be collected from NCDPI, LEAs, and questionnaires/instruments. The applicant has planned for ongoing monitoring

Sub

of teacher engagement, progress, and completion of micro-credentials will take place via the LMS.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

CPP - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: SEA Partnership

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate it has established a partnership between an eligible entity and an SEA (with either member of the partnership serving as the applicant) to support the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant has demonstrated an established partnership with an eligible entity and an SEA.
ETL is partnering with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), the
official designated state education agency (SEA). The applicant proposes through the Department of Digital Learning. ETL
continues the work started by a NCDPI work group in 2016 to, in the words of the State Director:
develop a framework for transitioning from CEUs (continuing education units) to a
competency-based metric where time is no longer the currency; and to develop an
implementation guide and supporting resources to facilitate the transition to competency based
professional development leveraging micro-credentials (Appendix C).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/29/2020 10:02 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)
Reader #2: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of Project Design			
1. Quality of Project Design		45	43
	Sub Total	45	43
Resources and Quality of Management Plan			
Resources and Quality of Management Plan			
1. Resources and Management		30	28
	Sub Total	30	28
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		25	24
	Sub Total	25	24
Priority Questions			
CPP			
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. SEA Partnership		5	5
	Sub Total	5	5
	Total	105	100

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project based on the following factors:

Reader's Score: 43

> **Sub**
>
> 1. **(1) The extent to which professional learning funded through the stipend will replace existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers at the following levels:**
>
> | Less than 20%- 0 points | 20%- 5 points |
> |---|---|
> | 40%- 10 points | 60%- 15 points |
> | 80%- 20 points | 100%-25 points |
>
> **Strengths:**
>
> The application provides evidence that the SEA, as well as LEAs, are in agreement that the process will replace 100% of the current professional practices for teachers to obtain recertification. For example, the plan specifies that ETL and LEAs will identify high priority goals, develop equivalency systems, designate PD Days for release and apply PD resources (p. e27-28).
>
> **Weaknesses:**
>
> N/A

> **Reader's Score:** 25

2. **(2) The adequacy of plans to ensure that stipends are appropriately used for high-quality professional learning.**

   Strengths:

   The applicant effectively ensures that stipends are appropriately used for professional learning by aligning PD to school priorities, creating micro-credentials, working with teachers and administrators, and analyzing data. These steps indicate a commitment to developing a rigorous process that requires educators to invest thoughtfully and intellectually in order to earn stipends (p. e29).

   Weaknesses:

   N/A

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will offer teachers flexibility and autonomy regarding the extent of the choice teachers have in selecting their professional learning.**

Strengths:

The application details a process that not only allows teachers to determine their own micro-credentials but to also choose from platforms other than Digital Promise (p.e30-31). For example, Digital Promise has several micro-credential options ranging from webinars to instructional coaches.
In addition, teachers may revise their learning plan and obtain credits through other providers to better meet their individual needs (p. e30).

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

4. **(4) The likelihood that the procedures and resources for teachers result in a simple process to select or request professional learning based on their professional learning needs and those identified needs of high-need students.**

Strengths:

Identifying and aligning to teacher needs and priorities are clearly exemplified in both the proposal (p. e31-32) and the template example (Appendix, p.e152-154). This is evidenced in the fact that teachers will identify their learning needs, select artifacts to demonstrate competency and establish their own timeline for completion.

Weaknesses:

Additional information should be provided regarding how the consideration of individual student need will be addressed—for example, IEPs, 504s, counselor referrals, and parent requests (p. e31). Providing such information assures that student needs are being addressed with the selection of micro-credentials.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The ETL Logic Model is a feasible plan based upon studies associated WWC (p.e23). The narrative and Table 3 (p. e32-34) detail how the goals, objectives and outcomes of the application are measurable. The establishment of regional baseline data during Phase 1 will allow (e.p33) growth to be measured. The combination of these elements ensure that the goals, objectives and outcomes are measurable. The inputs and activities outlined in the Logic Model should generate the described outputs. For example, understanding a teacher's characteristics and professional learning desires and then allowing them to select motivational micro-credentials should result in the expected outcome of enhanced self-efficacy for classroom implementation (p.e23). In turn, this links to Goal 3's second objective centered on creating an empowering professional learning experience. ETL states their intent to track teacher self-efficacy (p.e33-34).

Weaknesses:

Other than "reported buy-in by administration," there is no instrumentation tool that will indicate teacher satisfaction (ep.33)

Sub

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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. **(1) The sufficiency of the stipend amount to enable professional learning funded through the stipend to replace a significant portion of existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers.**

Strengths:

The stipend is reasonable as it aligns with the average allotment for the region (p.e34). In addition, the application describes a process to assist teachers should their expenses exceed the allotted stipend amount (p.e34-35). For example, if a teacher has needs that exceed the stipend amount, they may submit a request for additional funds. Furthermore, the completion of the Learning Contract initiates the first stipend which can be used to prepare for the teacher's upcoming micro-credentials

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

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 application is transparent in regard to how the costs were determined (p.e36). Given the outcomes, the cost factors seem reasonable in regard to the numerous micro-credential opportunities as listed in the Appendix (e p. 143-150). The fact that this process reduces a teacher's time out of the classroom, as well as travel costs, further justifies the costs.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed payment structure will enable teachers to have an opportunity to apply for and use the stipend with minimal burden.**

Strengths:

The payment structure, in addition to assigning an ETL Navigator who will be with the teacher from "start to finish," provides evidence of minimal burden. The approval of a teachers' self-determined Learning Contract sets the stipend process in motion which frontloads their ability to cover upcoming cost for each of their selected professional development activity (p.e35-37).

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

4. **(4) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

Table 5 (p.e39) provides evidence that key project personnel have extensive experience in professional development, research and fiscal accountability. The fact that Dr. Beeler, Principal Investigator, has experience in developing a teacher micro-credentials adds strength to the application. In addition, Ms. Smith's past history of successful internal audits provides evidence of fiscal responsibility and accountability.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

5. **(5) 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 speaks directly to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the Table 7. For example, the application describes the role of Project Director, PRDR, and provides insight on staff to be supervised by the role. (p e.41) For example, the Principal Investigator will oversee the project, develop relationships with external partners and monitor progress of the grant's objectives (p. e40). The role of The Navigators is key, as they will be assigned to a teacher throughout the micro-credentialing process which will allow supportive and trusting relationships to form (p. e40-41). In addition, using the five phases of project management ensures an effective and consistent communication plan (p. e40).

Weaknesses:

Table 7 lacks specific dates for task completion (p.e42-43).

Reader's Score: 4

6. **(6) The adequacy of procedures for leveraging the stipend program to inform continuous improvement and systematic changes to professional learning.**

Strengths:

ETL's intent to use Deming's Plan-Do-Study-Act demonstrates the potential of the application to continuously revise the process to be more effective. Using a repetitive, on-going process of data collection and analysis to determine and revise program improvement provides evidence of ETL's intent to continuously implement best practices to empower teacher ownership and create self-efficacy (p. e42-43).

Weaknesses:

The plan lacks clarity on how ETL will ensure that teacher voice is included in the continuous improvement process (p.e43). For example, the plan, as well Table 7, describe how teachers will complete forms, select, collect and share micro-credits but it does not speak to how teacher reflection on the overall process will be gathered (p. e42-42).

Sub

    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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: **24**

    Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).**

    Strengths:

    The application's focus on aligning to WWC's focus on teacher excellence ensures that the project will meet WWC standards with or without reservations. For example, the evaluation team plans to implement two analytic methods to examine group differences using the same statistical analyses (p.e46-47).

    Weaknesses:

    The application does not describe how attrition will be addressed throughout the grant cycle (p.e45-49). It is important to have a plan that addresses attrition due to the fact that attrition has the potential to impact the project, as well as the findings and conclusions.

    Reader's Score: **14**

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 application's grounding in competency-based education supports the proposal's assertion that it meets the measurable threshold for acceptable implementation through the completion of the four key activities outlined on p. e48. The application's provision of numerous research studies provides reasonable evidence that the project will be able to meet the criteria for acceptable implementation (p.e48). For example, ETL's decision to implement a Summer Training Program, as well as implement intensive professional development are supported by the two studies recognized by the What Works Clearing House - The Effects of Teacher Entry Journals on Student Achievement and Impact Results of the eMINTS Professional Development Validation Study (p. e23).

    Weaknesses:

    N/A

    Reader's Score: **5**

3. **(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Sub

Strengths:

The logic model (p.23), which will serve as the project's blueprint, demonstrates clear formative assessment practices that will guide the project team's performance feedback and periodic assessments throughout the grant term. For example, the evaluation team will conduct two formative studies and a final summative assessment (p. e49).

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

CPP - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: SEA Partnership

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate it has established a partnership between an eligible entity and an SEA (with either member of the partnership serving as the applicant) to support the proposed project.

Strengths:

The narrative and the State Education Support Letter make it clear that the ETL proposal will be a strong next step in the use of micro-credentialing to enhance teacher self-efficacy (ep.109).

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/29/2020 04:32 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)
Reader #3:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of Project Design			
1. Quality of Project Design		45	42
	Sub Total	45	42
Resources and Quality of Management Plan			
Resources and Quality of Management Plan			
1. Resources and Management		30	26
	Sub Total	30	26
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		25	23
	Sub Total	25	23
Priority Questions			
CPP			
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. SEA Partnership		5	5
	Sub Total	5	5
	Total	105	96

Panel #5 - FY19 EIR Early-phase AP 3- PD - 5: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Appalachian State University (S411C200093)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project based on the following factors:

Reader's Score: **42**

> **Sub**

  1. **(1) The extent to which professional learning funded through the stipend will replace existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers at the following levels:**

       Less than 20%- 0 points   **20%- 5 points**
       40%- 10 points   **60%- 15 points**
       80%- 20 points   **100%-25 points**

    Strengths:

    Factor 1: The applicant intends to replace 100% of the professional development from seat time to teacher selected micro-credentials.

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses noted.

    Reader's Score: **25**

  2. **(2) The adequacy of plans to ensure that stipends are appropriately used for high-quality professional learning.**

    Strengths:

    The applicant provides a clear plan for ensuring the stipends are appropriately used for high-quality flexible professional development through offering the teachers two options. The first option is the teacher can use the Digital Promise library of micro-credential professional development that has been vetted through the DP clearinghouse and/or the teacher can request participating in a professional development opportunity outside the DP platform that aligns with their professional development plan (e-30). The applicant includes a listing of the professional development offering in the appendices (pp. e-143-150). The non-DP platform PD must be approved by the learner ETL Navigator prior to participation by the teacher (e-37). Teachers participation will be monitored by the ETL Navigator who will be the liaison to ensure the teachers select professional development that matches their learning contract. The Navigator is also responsible for the verification process to ensure that the teacher completed their professional development and initiates the payment for the teachers to be reimbursed and incentivized for their participation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed project will offer teachers flexibility and autonomy regarding the extent of the choice teachers have in selecting their professional learning.**

Strengths:

The applicant outlines two (2) ways teachers can increase their autonomy in selecting professional development in which they can participate. The teachers can select from a menu of Digital Promise library and/or they can submit a request to go participate a different professional development source that will be reviewed and appropriateness assessed by the ETL Navigator through the use of a rubric that will be created once the funding has been approved. These options can provide a wide array of professional development opportunities that the teachers can select based on their professional development goals.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

4. **(4) The likelihood that the procedures and resources for teachers result in a simple process to select or request professional learning based on their professional learning needs and those identified needs of high-need students.**

Strengths:

The applicant describes a simplified process for the teachers applying for and receiving the professional development funds. The process described should reduce the paperwork and barriers of participating in professional development that matches the teachers learning needs. The process begins with a needs assessment and review of the student data to help the teachers develop an individualized learning plan. The learning contract development is completed during the initial summer session professional development convening. The completion of the learning contract initiates the first ███ payment for the teachers. The verification process for each of the required micro-learnings initiates the remaining 4 payments of ███ to the teachers that can be either electronically credited to the teacher's bank account or payment can be made via check upon request. Offering the teachers the options of electronic deposit or payment by check once the verification process is complete should reduce the paperwork barriers to payment and participation in professional development.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not discuss how the plan and process includes how the needs of high needs students will be addressed/met.

Reader's Score: 4

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

Strengths:

The applicant states the goals, objectives and outcomes in the logic model (pe-23) and again in Table 3 (pp. e-33-34). The goals, objectives and outcomes clearly align with the overall program objectives for teacher directed professional development to improve teacher buy-in and student achievement. Table 3 provides the specifics of each goal, objective and measurement indicator (pp. e-33-34). The five (5) main measurement indicators are standardized tests and scores that are reliable and valid measures of student and teacher progress (p. e-50).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant states they will develop the baseline measures for the outcomes during year 1 of the project. The logic model does not include any benchmarks for achievement of any of the outcomes. The ETL Milestone Table does not include the development of benchmarks for outcomes in the first year (p. e-42-43).

Reader's Score: 3

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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 26

Sub

1. **(1) The sufficiency of the stipend amount to enable professional learning funded through the stipend to replace a significant portion of existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers.**

Strengths:

The applicant states they intend to replace 100% of the professional development with the self-directed micro-credentialing plan. The applicant provides two options along with the initial summer offering so the teachers can develop their professional development plan/contract that they will follow for the five years of the project. The applicant also states if the teacher needs more than the ▮▮▮ for their micro-credentialing they can apply for additional funding to support the professional development choice (p. e-35).

Weaknesses:

The annual ▮▮▮ does not appear to be sufficient to cover professional development needs of the teachers. It seems like some of the changes to the classroom implementations may cost more than the ▮▮▮ allotted for each of the professional development activities. For example, if the participant plans to participate in a conference—cost for travel and conference fees alone can be much more than ▮▮▮ and then the costs of purchasing any of the materials for implementing something the teacher learned at the conference, say for example on robotics or science, can cost much more than ▮▮▮ (p. e-34).

Reader's Score: 3

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 proposed budget for the five (5) year project ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. This amount seems reasonable for the scope and length of the project. The costs align with the goals, objectives and outcomes at the current scale. The applicant describes a plan to share lessons learned, contribution to the current research on teacher directed professional development and a process for streamlining the payment process for supporting teacher directed professional development. The applicant describes each of the cost categories and justifies the budget in the budget narrative. For example, the stipends reflect a per student cost of ▮▮▮ per student per year (p. e-36) and when the overall budget is considered the per student cost increases to ▮▮▮ per student (p. e-36). The evaluation plan is comprehensive and is one of the larger budget items. The total cost of the evaluation for the five year funding cycle is ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ of the total amount requested (p. e-172).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed payment structure will enable teachers to have an opportunity to apply for and use the stipend with minimal burden.**

Strengths:

The payment structure is initiated after the summer offering and the teacher's learning contract is developed. The additional 4 payments for each of the project years are tied directly to the verification process of the micro-credentialing completion. The process has limited paperwork that is mostly completed with the support of the ETL Navigator reducing the burden on the teacher and school administration. The electronic transfer option for stipend payment reduces wait time between submission of request for participation and payment (p. e-29).

Weaknesses:

The non-Digital Promise professional development options require additional paperwork and justification for participation that can increase the burden on the teacher to get the ▮▮▮▮ (p. e-35).

Reader's Score: 4

4. **(4) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

Strengths:

Each of the current members of the project team have strong credentials that support their ability for following through with the proposed project. Both the Pi and the PRDR have several years of experience with federal grants and contracts. The evaluation team also has a strong history of working on national level projects of similar scope and nature as the proposed project. For example, Dr. Tillery team lead for evaluation has 25 years of experience working on evaluations of federal grants and is a graduate of Appalachian State (p. e-83). The Project Director, Doug Thomas, has worked in professional development with teachers across North Carolina for 13 years and has responsibilities related to supporting federal grants (pp. e-81-82). The applicant has established relationships with the LEA and other project partners. The letters of support indicate strong relationships and partner buy-in and willingness to participate with the applicant on the proposed project. The letters of support also indicate a belief in the applicant in carrying out a successful project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant fully describes the project management plan and specifies the roles of each of the project staff. The roles and responsibilities align with the project goals, objectives and milestones as identified on pp. e39-42. For example, the project will hire 3 Navigators that will shepherd the teacher credentialing process and be the gatekeeper for payment. The Navigators are responsible for all steps in the micro-credentialing verification process including ensuring the teacher completes their learning contract activities, micro-credentials and stipend process (p. e-41). The applicant describes the 5 phases of the project management plan and the processes which will occur in

each of these phases. The applicant also describes the Advisory Board and how that board will function to support the achievement of the milestones and contribute to the overall project goal achievement (p. e-41).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

6. **(6) The adequacy of procedures for leveraging the stipend program to inform continuous improvement and systematic changes to professional learning.**

Strengths:

The applicant describes the continuous quality improvement process it intends to use to both monitor fidelity to the program processes and also to document lessons learned that can be shared within the educational community (p. e. 45-46). The evaluation Supplemental Evaluation Plan table in the appendix (pp. e-61-62) presents each of the project components included in the continuous quality improvement plan including when data is collected, by whom it is collected and reviewed and how the progress monitoring. The inclusion of a community of practice among the teacher participants also has the potential to expand the learning across the teacher community (p. e-52). The applicant also has relationships with state educational leaders that they intend to share the lessons learned with to inform policy changes related to scaling up teacher professional development policies and practices (letters of support).

Weaknesses:

It is not clear how teacher engagement will be measured and linked to continuous quality improvement of the program (p. e-34). It is also not clear how teacher efficacy will be linked to the continuous quality improvement of the program model practices will be addressed.

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 based on the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).**

Strengths:

The applicant intends to use a cluster randomized control trial that includes schools, teachers and students. The two group design will include a treatment and control group. The control group will get the treatment in the final year of the project. This method of phasing in the control group during the final year minimizes the ethical dilemma of RCTs. The outcomes are related to teacher and student changes that directly link to the professional development treatment. The measurement indicators are based on reliable and valid instruments that should demonstrate change in teacher and students. The proposed evaluation design if implemented as stated will meet

the WW Clearinghouse standards without reservations (p. e-37).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not discuss the potential for attrition and how attrition will be addressed to ensure maximum power (p. e-46.)

Reader's Score: 13

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 includes the threshold for acceptable implementation that includes the completion of four (4) key project components: completion of the needs assessment prior to the intervention; completion and approved learning contract before the intervention; completion of nine micro-credentials over three years in Phases 2-4 (see Appendix I); and receipt of the full stipends totaling ▮▮▮▮ per year for three years for a total of ▮▮▮▮. The evaluation section of the proposal also describes the key project components, mediators and outcomes for the project. The mediators are clearly described and grounded in published research (p.e-48-49). The outcomes and their measurement are described and linked to each of the mediators.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Strengths:

The applicant proposes an evaluation process that includes assessment at specific time points of the project (appendix p e-161). The measurement tools that will be used for the assessment are reliable and valid and align with the intended outcomes. The time points for measurement are reasonable for determining outcomes and providing continuous quality improvement feedback to the project implementation team. The Supplemental Evaluation Plan Table in the Appendix includes the specific time points for the assessment tools (pp. e-161-162). For example, the first administration of the CLASS will be administered during September 2021, over a 6 -8-week window. The second administration of the CLASS will be in 03-2022; third administration will be in 03-2023 and the final administration will be in 03-2024. This classroom observation component will provide opportunity for documentation of specific practices that will inform practice and support teacher improvement. The feedback loop for the results of the CLASS are also indicated in the Supplemental Evaluation Table (p. e-161).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Priority Questions

CPP - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2: SEA Partnership**

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate it has established a partnership between an eligible entity and an SEA (with either member of the partnership serving as the applicant) to support the proposed project.

   Strengths:

   The applicant provides excellent documentation of the ongoing relationship with the SEA and other partners. The letters of support include members of the SEA (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction) and LEA as well as other partners that will support the proposed project. The applicant includes twenty-one (21) letters of support that include the SEA and LEA. The letters demonstrate the partners are willing and able to support the proposed project.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
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