

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:24 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Sub Total	100	70
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	6	3
Total	106	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #17 - EIR Early Phase - 17: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a thorough discussion of the proposed project to “develop, implement, and test an innovative approach to academic and social learning (SEL) integration” (e2). The project will build upon SEL by supporting educators to develop strategies to support the connection between SEL, improving their ability to implement SEL despite testing requirements and other responsibilities (e2).

Supporting the need for the project, the applicant provided a description of the current challenges to implement SEL, which included ability of educators who do not feel they can consistently implement SEL, particularly for those most underserved (e2).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

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: 30

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the conceptual framework underlying the proposed project (Project Harmony), which includes the use of “intergroup contact theory and socio-cognitive theories of development” (e6) to facilitate harmonious social interactions that facilitate successful school achievement.

In support, the applicant provided a description of a “toolkit,” which includes multiple tools for educators (i.e., how to incorporate SEL into daily activities and concrete examples of each approach) with the goal of enhancing educator skills and improvement in school performance for students (e6-e7).

To support participating educators to implement the program with fidelity, educators will receive the “Taxonomy of Academic Integration framed within responsive

10/10 points

practices, tools, and educator support (PL and coaching)” (e7) and provided further documentation in Figure 1: Harmony Conceptual Model. Through implementation of these supports, the project will support teachers with the quality implementation of SEL project strategies with the goal of improving student outcomes in academics, SEL skills, and classroom climate (e7).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided an extensive description of goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the Harmony Project, including specific and measurable outcomes, and provided documentation in Table 1: Measurable Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes. For example, for Goal 2: Increase educator capacity and efficacy to amplify social and emotional skills within their academic curriculum, the applicant stated: Objective 2.1: Engage in academic-SEL integration PL and the outcome- 2.1 294; Educators engage in PL by Year 4 (e10).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a thorough description of strategies the project will use to successfully address the needs of the targeted population and included Letters of Support in Appendix C, which reflect the commitment of the participating schools to provide a more “affirming and holistic educational experience for high-needs

Sub

students” (e11).

To support the needs of the target population who experienced a lack of access to equity focused SEL programs revealing disproportionate inequities in social and emotional wellness from trauma from the pandemic, the applicant provided an explanation of the strategies to be implemented to support high need students. These include imbedding SEL skills within academic subjects, intentionally providing lessons with more inclusive and representation in characters and activities, and inclusive of more interactive and culturally responsive instructional practices. The applicant believes implementation of the Harmony Project will lead to improved classroom climates and improvement in student outcomes. The applicant provided further documentation in Appendix G, Project’s Logic Model (e12-e13, Appendix G).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the qualifications of key staff, including relevant training and experience. In support, the applicant provided a summary of the qualifications of Harmony staff and brief biographical sketches of each key staff member, documented by their resumes. For example, the Principal Investigator, Nick Yoder, has over 18 years of experience working with states and school leaders to implement multiple high-quality SEL programs and the Project Manager, Dr. Whitney Cignatta, is an experienced educator and researcher with experience in supporting educators identify strategies to support SEL (e5-e16).

The applicant included a discussion of the process to employ persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented. In support, the applicant stated: “At Harmony, the team uses intentional hiring practices to employ persons who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented and have diverse work experiences” (e15) and included its recent hire of a Director of Professional Learning and Equity as an example of its hiring practices that reflect employment of underrepresented personnel (e15).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. 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. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a management plan summary that identified each of the project partners and their responsibilities. For example, Harmony was identified as the lead for the project, AIR will serve as research partner, and District partners will be responsible for helping to recruit schools who meet the criteria for participating in the project (e17).

The applicant provided a description of the development of a "toolkit." The toolkit, using the taxonomy framework, will provide access via the applicant's digital framework, which will then provide access to hundreds of thousands of teachers, permitting them to observe lessons and conduct focus groups with their students (e18).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

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

Sub

Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:

(a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.

(b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.

- (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
- (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
- (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address activities designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students either in student-centered learning models, projects to support middle school transition to high school, advanced courses and programs, project-based learning or career and technical education courses.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:

(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The applicant provided a description of strategies to address the impact of Covid-19 “which exacerbated long-standing inequities and limited access to resources for high-needs students, families, and educators” (e5). The Harmony program will provide opportunities for students to “connect/re-connect with each other and build SEL skills to better manage emotions, set, and monitor goals and solve personal and interpersonal problems” (e5).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:24 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:56 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Sub Total	100	70
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	6	3
Total	106	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #17 - EIR Early Phase - 17: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

The proposed project aims to develop, implement, and test an innovative approach to academic and social and emotional learning (SEL) integration (p. e22). The applicant will focus on grades three through five in 49 schools located in three partnership school districts (New York City Department of Education, San Antonio Independent School District, and Washoe County School District). The selected school districts serve high-needs students, including those who are economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and/or students of color (p. e22).

The applicant clearly articulates that educators realize the need to incorporate SEL but they experience challenges due to academic mandates. Therefore, the proposed project would support educators in developing strategies to support the connection between social, emotional, and academic development, while improving educators' ability to infuse SEL despite testing mandates (pp. e22-e23).

The proposed project involves the demonstration of promising new strategies that would test a model that combines Harmony (an evidence-based SEL program) with Harmony Standard (a taxonomy of academic-SEL curriculum) (p. e23).

The promising new strategies would help to build educators' capacity to implement SEL that would contribute to students' overall academic success and develop trusting relationships with their peers (p. e23).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 20

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: 30

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

Strengths:

There is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research containing outputs (i.e., Schools: increase access to rigorous coursework) and outcomes (Schools: Improved teacher practice and student behavior) (p. e27). The intergroup contact theory and socio-cognitive theories of development undergird the Harmony program (p. e26). To ensure educators develop the capacity to integrate SEL into students throughout the school day, the proposed project intends to provide educators with the Taxonomy of Academic Integration framed within culturally responsive practices. Additionally, educators would receive support from professional learning and coaching.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are specified and measurable as depicted in Table 1. Measurable Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes (pp. e30-e31). For instance, Goal 4 (Codify and disseminate tested model to integrate academic and social and emotional skills within academic instruction) is aligned with Objective 4.1 (Codify strategies that educators used within learning environments to integrate academics and SEL) and Outcome 4.1 (Three tools (e.g., toolkit, PL experiences, coaching tools, or exemplars) will be developed that will help others integrate academics and SEL).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

Strengths:

The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population. The applicant has identified three large school districts that have access to a high percentage of high-need students. For example, the New York City Department of Education serves over 1,000,000 students with 82% students of color and 73% living in poverty. Therefore, the applicant plans to intentionally recruit specific schools that are identified with the highest needs (pp. e.31-32).

Based on current research, the proposed project seeks to deliver its social and emotional learning program with an equity lens to ensure high-need students are provided with sufficient attention to uplifting cultural assets and to build relationships with other diverse (i.e., gender, race, or interests) individuals (p. e33). The project design includes continuous improvement to determine Harmony Integration's effectiveness to address high-need students (p. e34).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant includes qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel (Principal Investigator, Project Manager, Harmony Implementation Team, Harmony Product and Innovation Team, Oversight Committee, and District Teams) (pp. e35-e36). In addition, the applicant includes the specific role for each key project personnel. For instance, the Project Manager's research agenda is grounded in the underlying principle that underserved students deserve equitable access to robust learning opportunities. In addition to earning a doctoral degree, the proposed Project Manager served as a special education teacher and reading specialist. In this project, the Project Manager will ensure the effective completion of tasks across the implementation, product and innovation, research, and district teams (p. e35).

The applicant employs intentional hiring practices to employ individuals who have traditionally been underrepresented. Recently, the applicant hired a Director of Professional Learning and Equity to ensure hiring practices adhere to high-quality Social Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office's principles at its institution (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. 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. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant includes 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 (pp. e37-e39). For instance, Harmony and District teams are responsible for designing enhanced professional learning on academic social and emotional learning integration as a milestone in year one, quarter one (p. e38).

The applicant provides a broad timeline (a. planning phase, b. implementation year 1 – formative design cohort, c. implementation year 2 – formative design cohort year 2; add randomized control trial cohort, d. implementation year 3 – random control trial year 2, and e. dissemination and sustainability (p. e132). For example, in Implementation Year 1, the applicant plans to provide professional learning on Harmony and on Harmony Integration (p. e132).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

- 2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

Sub

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:

- (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
- (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
- (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
- (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
- (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

No strengths noted

Weaknesses:

Per Competitive Priority One, the target population is underserved students in middle school or high school. The proposed project's target population are underserved students in grades three through five (p. e22).

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:

(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The applicant states the Harmony program would provide students with opportunities to connect and develop social emotional learning (SEL) skills to manage their emotions and solve interpersonal problems (p. e25). The foundation of Harmony Integration is to provide educators with the tools to assist students with their SEL skills, which would have a positive impact on their academics (p. e25).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:56 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:20 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Sub Total	100	69
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	3
Sub Total	6	3
Total	106	72

Technical Review Form

Panel #17 - EIR Early Phase - 17: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

Strengths:

The proposed project is an expansion of prior work with Harmony SEL. The project is designed to further develop Harmony SEL based on prior work and expand the program's impact. The applicant will conduct research across 49 schools to measure outcomes between the current program of Harmony SEL and a new program that integrates the Harmony SEL curriculum with academic instruction. The narrative demonstrates a connection between SEL integration and improved academic achievement and provides evidence of a promising new strategy.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

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: 30

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

Strengths:

The project design includes a pilot phase, and then a roll-out of the program across multiple contexts to enable comparison of outcomes. The project plan includes training and coaching for teachers, tools for teachers and

Sub

students, and a logical structure for delivering proposed content. These elements work together to create a project design that is likely to be successful in attaining stated goals.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The project goals are appropriate to the grant goals and SEL priority. Objectives align with goals and can be reasonably expected to produce stated outputs and outcomes. The project objectives and performance measures are clear, specific, and meaningful. The connection between goals, objectives, and measures is logical. The goals, objectives, and outcomes demonstrate the applicant's ability to successfully plan and implement the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

Strengths:

The Harmony SEL program is designed to address the academic and social needs of all struggling students. The program design includes multiple opportunities for student feedback and progress measures through surveys, academic assessments, and classroom observations. The proposal provides research and narrative to justify the expectation that this program will address the needs of the target population.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

- 1. The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race,**

Sub

color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)

Strengths:

The staff and leadership of the organization have appropriate experience, education, and expertise related to the project. For example, the senior director has 18+ years of experience working with SEL in schools and districts. The program manager is a former special education teacher and reading specialist. Their experience and education support the work proposed in this project. The experience and educational background of key personnel provide a strong foundation for the proposed project.

The applicant states a commitment to inclusion. For example, the applicant states they have hired a director who partners with the Social Justice, Diversity, Equity, and inclusion Office to ensure best practices in hiring.

Weaknesses:

There is no reference to current staff demographics to demonstrate their commitment to hiring employees from underrepresented groups. Without this information, the applicant has not demonstrated that their current hiring practices have been successful in attracting employees from underrepresented groups.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. 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. (10 points)**

Strengths:

Timeline is appropriate and manageable. Budget includes appropriate expenses that appear reasonable. The timeline includes high-level tasks that will be completed to keep the program making progress toward goals. The majority of expected costs will support personnel, benefits, and training stipends for the project.

Project timeline is not specific on responsibilities for tasks, but responsibilities are outlined in narrative.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:

(a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.

(b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.

(c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.

(d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.

(e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

Not addressed.

Weaknesses:

Not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:

(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The proposed project offers a plan to re-engage students in in-person instruction through SEL integration. The proposal is designed to provide evidence-based supports for students, including social-emotional learning supports. The applicant includes support for teachers who serve the target student population through professional learning and coaching. The applicant provides evidence of research that supports the connection between improving SEL skills for students and supporting teachers' capacity for this work with improved student engagement and academic success. Based on the planning and evidence provided, the applicant demonstrates the likelihood of success in addressing the impacts of COVID-19 for the target population.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/23/2022 11:20 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/12/2022 01:11 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	24
Total	30	24

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - EIR Tier 2 - 2: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 24

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

The impact evaluation utilizes a school-level randomized design which has the potential to produce evidence about the project's effectiveness based on What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations (p. e39). The evaluation plan proposes to implement pair-matched randomization design to address school-level attrition. The overall and differential attrition rates will be calculated based on WWC standards (p. e135). A total of 20 matched pairs will be formed (based on student demographics, and prior achievement data) and used in the final sample which can improve baseline equivalence and account for attrition-related bias (p. e41). Minimum detectable effect sizes are computed through power analysis (p. e43) for the three-level hierarchical linear model (HLM).

Weaknesses:

The methods used to handle missing data are inadequately addressed in the impact analysis plan (p. e43). The criteria used to recruit the 48 schools are not discussed in the evaluation plan. The definition of high-need student is not clearly stated.

Reader's Score: 18

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Strengths:

The project evaluation builds on past data and partnerships with the school districts. The impact evaluation utilizes multiple data sources and both quantitative and qualitative data to answer the evaluation research questions that are aligned to the project goals. The student and educator outcome measures are clearly stated in the evaluation plan (p. e42). Data collection timelines for the outcome measures for the impact evaluation study are clearly described in the project evaluation design (p. e42). The sample, design, data sources, analyses and feedback processes are described separately for the impact evaluation and implementation fidelity studies. The communication protocols for continuous improvement and feedback include bi-weekly meetings between the AIR evaluation team and project personnel (p. e46). The project includes a separate team for implementation and

Sub

innovation of the Harmony product as well as teams within school districts which makes it easier for the evaluation team to provide feedback and facilitate periodic assessment of the project's progress. There is discussion on handling of covariates during the impact and implementation evaluation (p. e133 and e.161). The applicant will use multiple measures for student and educator outcomes and longitudinal tracking of data collection items.

Weaknesses:

The measures used for inter-observer ratings for video lessons are not described in the implementation study (p. e44). The evaluation plan does not clearly discuss the methods that will be used to integrate the quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

The evaluation plan poses separate research questions for the mediators and moderators in Table 4 (p. e40). The plan to analyze the effect of mediator and moderator is clearly discussed (p. e43). A fidelity of implementation matrix will be utilized to establish cut-off points (p. e44). The project evaluation plan clearly describes the steps to calculate overall measures of treatment fidelity (p. e45).

Weaknesses:

The project lacks specific details on the two coaching sessions (in-person and virtual) for the educators. Specifically, information on the timeline for implementing these sessions, data collection measures, and components of the coaching session are inadequately addressed in the proposal. The components of the social-emotional learning framework and the elements of professional learning (PL) are poorly described. The differences between the enhanced PL (9 hours) and PL on Harmony (3-hours) lacks clear explanation (professional learning goals on p. e38). The details of the survey that were used to establish the increased use of .315 standard deviations are missing (within goal 2- p. e30 and e31). The process for assessing the alignment of the model lesson plans and observer videos to the (p. e28) social-emotional learning taxonomy approaches is not clearly discussed.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/12/2022 01:11 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/12/2022 12:32 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	24
Total	30	24

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - EIR Tier 2 - 2: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: National University (S411C220055)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 24

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

The impact evaluation design uses a school-level randomized design which, if well implemented, should produce evidence about the project's effectiveness and meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations (e39-46). The design includes 40 schools, 240 educators, and 7,200 students (e41). The study will use hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses to accommodate the nested nature of the design (e43).

It is the schools themselves which are randomly assigned to treatment and control conditions (e41). These numbers are more than sufficient according to the included rationale (e141-142) which includes a power analysis, description of the minimum detectable effect size, and discussion about how they will treat missing data (e43). Any concerns due to attrition are sufficiently addressed (e41; 135-136). There is also a sufficient description for establishing baseline equivalence between the two groups (e136).

The evaluator states they will use research-validated measures with reliabilities above 0.50 to meet WWC reliability standards (e42).

Weaknesses:

The means by which schools are recruited and then selected from the larger population of schools is not entirely clear (e41,133,135-136).

The applicant does not describe the population of high-need students beyond "identified as English Learners (EL), and those who are from traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations" and "economically disadvantaged" (e7,19, 31). This makes it difficult to determine if the research recruitment design aligns with the goals of the project.

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

2. (2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)

Strengths:

This project is designed to provide feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward the desired outcomes. The project design includes two continuous and iterative improvement cycles (e34). The team will first pilot the intervention with a “formative design cohort” (FDC) (e34), made up of nine schools and 54 educators to test the new tools and improved professional development. The next school year, the FDC will receive coaching support in the Fall and Winter, which provides feedback to the educators about their use of the new tools in their classrooms. Project partners will use data (feedback from educators and students and outcome data) as early indicators to gauge the initial impact on student outcomes and to consider possible changes in implementation (tools and professional learning) prior to the randomized control trial.

Any data collected during each of the five school years is analyzed and shared with project partners to make improvements and identify integration best practices (e38). Revising the implementation toolkit is built into Years 1-4 (e38). Educators incorporating coaching feedback is built into Years 2&3.

Assessing and revising the utility and effectiveness of the professional development is built into Years 2-4 (e38). This fidelity of implementation data is part of the overall research design and includes three associated research questions (e40). The implementation study will look at the degree of implementation, its success, and possible improvements to be made (e40). Data sources include participation in professional learning and coaching activities, use of the curricular materials, twice annual observer ratings, self-reports of implementation, surveys, and focus groups (e44).

The evaluators will examine levels of implementation fidelity (for both treatment and control groups) overall and across educators, schools, districts, treatment/control conditions, and years (e46). They will use themes from focus group data and responses from implementation items added to the educator surveys to understand facilitators and challenges of implementing the programs and the relationships between these factors and implementation fidelity levels. Through regular feedback processes to support continuous improvement, evaluators will use biweekly meetings with the project team to share preliminary findings and annual memos (winter) and reports (summer) to share final findings to leverage and surface opportunities for improvement (e46).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant has done a poor job of addressing this criterion. One strength is that the applicant defines implementation fidelity as meeting or exceeding a threshold score of 60%. They will use the first year of the FDC to finalize fidelity cut-levels for the randomized controlled trial (RCT).

Weaknesses:

Many project components are poorly described. The Harmony Integration intervention is not clearly described (e26-28). It is unclear what is involved in the Taxonomy of Academic Integration to be incorporated into the professional development (PD) (e27-28). The nine hours of PD itself are poorly described, in terms of content. The three of hours of “strong start” (e38) are not explained. The social and emotional learning (SEL) tools are not clearly

Sub

described (e28-29). Coaching is not clearly explained (e29).

The applicant is imprecise with regards to the outcome constructs being measured. Throughout the narrative and in the evaluation plan (e136-137) and logic model (e118) the outcomes are sometimes referred to under their umbrella category, such as SEL or classroom climate, and other times as an outcome within the umbrella category. Matching and aligning these across the proposal is problematic. In the logic model alone, there are 12 umbrella constructs and 37 individual constructs listed as “for example,” meaning that there are many more than 37 being considered in the study. The combination of all of these misalignments and imprecision in defining the constructs of interest is very confusing.

For example, the discussion of SEL and its individual constructs is confusing. In the significance section SEL is described as including both intrapersonal skills (self-awareness, perseverance, and self-regulation) and interpersonal skills (building relationships, awareness of others, and being inclusive) (e22). Page e23 describes SEL as emotions, self-regulated learning, and motivation. In the table where goals, objectives, and outcomes are listed, the only SEL mentioned in the 17 outcomes is outcome 3.3 where interpersonal competencies are mentioned (e30-31). This leaves out the intrapersonal competencies which are discussed in the evaluation (e40). Additionally, the outcomes listed in this table do not align well with the numerous student outcomes listed in the logic model (e118). Page e33 lists research hypotheses with five enumerated outcomes, some of which are in the evaluation plan and logic model and some of which do not appear to be included (for example teacher “efficacy” competencies). The table on pages e136-137 which shows WWC eligible outcome measures lists 12 constructs of interest, two of which are not mentioned anywhere else (student engagement and school safety).

Similarly, “classroom climate” is imprecisely used throughout the proposal as an outcome construct (e27). It is unclear how this relates to similar constructs called “positive behavior in the classroom” (Outcome 3.2), “classroom interactions” (Outcome 3.4), or improved “student behavior” (Outcome 3.6) (e31) and outcomes in the logic model, “teacher-student relationships”, and “student belonging”. It is not clear what data sources or measures will be used to collect classroom climate data.

Measurable teacher outcome 2.5 (e30) discusses increased job satisfaction, but job satisfaction is not clearly listed in the logic model (e118). Educator outcome “self efficacy” (e27) is not clearly found in the logic model (e118).

The applicant does not provide a list of mediators which will be used in the analysis (e139-140).

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/12/2022 12:32 PM