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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)
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	8
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	68
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Workforce Diversity		2	0
	Sub Total	7	5
	Total	77	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #13 - EIR Early-Phase - 13: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 20

> **Sub**
>
> 1. **(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:**
>
>   Applicant cites a wealth of compelling evidence of the critical need for the Helpers program, a strategy to address the mental health crisis for students, who are increasingly struggling with suicide ideation. They effectively point out the treatment disparities for students of color, and as a rural applicant they adequately identify the critical lack of services in remote areas. Applicant proposes an innovation to pilot an SEL program to train and empower parents and educators to implement a mental health intervention enhanced with cultural and linguistically responsive curriculum. The promise of the strategy is strong and is more fully discussed by applicant on page e19 under Criterion B1.
>
>   **Weaknesses:**
>
>   none 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:

Applicant clearly outlines a strong, research-based framework designed to address the significance of the educational problems – high rates of suicide ideation and other SEL deficiencies that create learning barriers. They identify research gaps, and propose how their design will address the deficiencies and lead to successful interventions that are affordable and sustainable (e37). Their design demonstrates a rationale, explicit in the logic model, with a robust approach to empowering and supporting teachers, educators and schools/districts to be effective Helpers. The approach to training parents is appropriately sensitive to the needs of adult learners. Applicant's recognition of the value of rural LEAs to implement the project shows thorough consideration of reaching and serving rural students.

Weaknesses:

none 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 and SMART objectives are organized in the management plan in Exhibit 7 (e30). Performance measures are appropriate and timely, with personnel clearly assigned to conduct those measures. For example, the VP of Advancement is assigned to finalize MOUs with partner schools between January 2025 and April 2026.

Weaknesses:

none 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:

Applicant demonstrates an acute awareness of the populations to be served, by presenting a compelling summary of results from a risk and resiliency survey conducted among New Mexico middle student schools in target areas (Appendix J). Considering the results, they are proactive to prioritize schools with highest need, including comparable schools in Arizona, and have organized partnerships with appropriate stakeholders and experts, Applicant has cemented a key partnership with New Mexico's Dept of Health, Education and Social Transformation to specifically address the needs of Hispanic families and rural communities in the Southwest.

Weaknesses:

none 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 the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. **(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:

   Project Team consist of highly qualified professionals with appropriate wide range and depth of experience, Personnel are linked clearly to their roles in the management plan, and even include members of the medical advisory board. All key personnel hold expertise highly relevant to the project's operations and goals. For example, the Chief Advisory Officer is appropriately assigned to support school recruitment as he has 25 years of experience in school networking.

   Weaknesses:

   While applicant states a non-discrimination policy and commitment to diversity, they do not specify tools or resources they will use to encourage employees from underrepresented groups when a vacancy occurs. This section lacks a concrete plan, i.e. use of journals, networks, listservs, to recruit individuals who are underrepresented.

   Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. **(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.**

   Strengths:

   Applicant offers an exceptionally detailed management plan, demonstrating a high likelihood of attainability for each goal. They have considered the importance of monitoring budget and resources, and outlined specifically the roles and responsibilities of each team member. For example, the co-PD is clearly identified as responsible for ensuring all project activities are conducted on time and with high quality (page e155, budget narrative). The timeline appears ambitious yet achievable due to the thoroughness of the management plan. For example, as described on page E31, the minutes of meetings with Medical Advisory Board will be consulted to provide feedback for improvement

Sub

    Weaknesses:

    none noted

    Reader's Score: **10**

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners
(up to 5 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with
one or more of the following entities:
(a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
(b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
(c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
(d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

    Strengths:

Applicant identifies NMSU, a minority-serving institution, as playing a critical role as a partner – proving expert support to
innovate and enhance the project's components to be culturally and linguistically responsive for targeted populations. The
Implementer, CCHC, has demonstrated a strong commitment through its Helpers program to increase equity in student
access.

    Weaknesses:

    none noted

Reader's Score: **5**

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning
(up to 2 points)

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving
students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts'
capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding
comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include
opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership
roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

    Strengths:

    not applicable

Weaknesses:

not applicable

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/13/2023 12:37 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/13/2023 08:59 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	18
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	28
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	7
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	63
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Workforce Diversity		2	0
	Sub Total	7	5
	Total	77	68

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

1. (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 provides adequate research to demonstrate the significance and need for "helpers" to address youth mental health. The applicant includes research on barriers to access mental health services especially in rural areas, and includes bringing parents and families into the solution. The applicant adequately describes the "helpers" model (e14) to serve 83 middle schools in two different states .

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not indicated the degree to which the parentguidance.org resource which already exists in Spanish (e26) will be considerably different or unique for this project.

Reader's Score: 18

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: 28

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 applicant provides a strong framework which clearly aligns to the project design. The logic model (e 141) provides a clear layout of the projects' inputs, research-based activities, outputs and outcomes. The applicant

provides adequate research to justify the project framework and quality of activities proposed. The applicant provides clear rationale when identifying how they will work with key stakeholders including the districts and schools themselves, parents, and educators. The applicant has a well thought out framework to provide professional development to educators and on-demand courses and parental coaching to parents. The applicant describes staff PD opportunities clearly in Appendix J (e46)

Weaknesses:

The applicant fails to address students as a key stakeholder and it is not evident how much they will take student voice into account while developing this project. For example, the logic model mentions inputs from districts/schools, teachers and parents but fails to clearly mention student voice.

Reader's Score: 9

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 Management Plan (Exhibit 7 e 30-32) provides an adequate plan addressing goals, objectives, and outcomes. The goals are adequate and complete to attain the project, and the activities are aligned with the provided objectives. Evaluation is provided regarding the "helpers" model . For example, Obj. 2. By June 1, 2025, complete pilot implementation of the "Helpers" model in three pilot middle schools in three different districts. This objective is supported by various activities including professional development, parent outreach, and virtual coaching.

Weaknesses:

While the SMART objectives provide some measurement in specifying dates and participation rates, there are no objectives related to short term or long term outcomes regarding school climate, perceptions or practices, and knowledge or behaviors for students, parents or educators. While the applicant provides a proposed Evaluation Measurement including this type of data (e151-152), there are no objectives that align with meeting specific benchmarks for outcomes.

Reader's Score: 4

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 provides ample research and evidence depicting the need of the target populations and the specific need of this particular type of intervention. The applicant provides a chart of Key Mental Health Indicators (Appendix J e150) that indicates high youth risk in bullying, suicide, and mental distress in the counties they intend to serve. They also note a high level of suicide deaths in New Mexico. The applicant clearly expresses the needs for both the Hispanic and rural population subsets they intend to serve.

Weaknesses:

There were no noted weaknesses.

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 the following factor:**

Reader's Score: 7

   Sub

   1. **(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 clearly portrays significant experience and success of key project personnel to ensure the sustainability and dissemination of this project. Exhibit 5 (e28-29) thoroughly indicates the Grant Management Team and specifies areas that each team member will be responsible for. The applicant clearly indicates that they are an equal opportunity employer (e29). Appendix B clearly lists the resumes of key personnel including the leadership team, design and implementation team, evaluation team, and advisory board indicating their relevant training and experiences.

      Weaknesses:

      While the applicant indicates that they are an equal opportunity employer, they do not clearly specify a plan to encourage applications for employment from the underserved.

      Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 10

   Sub

   1. **(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.**

      Strengths:

      Exhibits 6 (e29) provides a timeline of the project components ensuring attention to the overall management plan for the project as a whole. While Exhibit 7 provides a clear and detailed project management plan. The plan aligns with the logic model and the goals and objectives of the project (e 30-32). All aspects of the plan are clearly defined including timeline, responsibilities, and milestones. For example, objective 2 is assigned to Co-PD PM, and will be measured using the Pilot data report, between 8/1/24–6/1/25, The budget narrative clearly details project costs and the match requirement. Detailed costs for each year and category of the budget are provided and on target to meet

Sub

project goals.

Weaknesses:

There were no noted weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
(a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
(b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
(c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
(d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

Strengths:

The applicant defines a partnership with New Mexico State University which is listed in the eligibility matrix for partnerships. The partner provides a letter of support in Appendix C (e118) that provides a strong account of the partnership to serve Hispanic youth and rural communities.

Weaknesses:

There were no noted weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning (up to 2 points)

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/13/2023 08:59 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)
Reader #3: **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	19
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	28
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	5
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	8
Sub Total	70	60
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	5
Total	77	65

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

1. **(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:

   Applicant includes national data (E16) with YRBS data around depression and suicidal ideation along with regional statistics that show New Mexico has the 2nd highest rate of suicide in the nation and that Arizona is 35% higher than the national rate (E16).   There are further details around low income children having less access to mental health services with Hispanic youth showing the greatest gap (E17). Additional impacts of rural communities and lack of school and community based mental providers was also presented (E17). The need for relationships as a protective factor along with training to support adults in engaging in conversations around mental health are noted (E18). The project is seeking increase the capacity to be culturally responsive to the mostly rural schools and Hispanic communities this project will serve (E19).

   Weaknesses:

   It is not clear how the project expands on what is already available to families via content on the website. While the applicant speaks to making updates it is not clear on what this will encompass.

   Reader's Score: 19

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: 28

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 application speaks to the integration of mental health across adolescent support systems (district/schools, educators, and parents) and has designed the logic model centered on this conceptual framework (E20). The application includes relevant research on why these were selected with a strong history of evidence that schools can be protective factors for students' mental health (E20), that educators provide the individual relationships with students, especially in under resourced rural communities (E21), and finally that parents who are concerned about their children's emotional well being often do not feel they have adequate knowledge to help in this area (E22).

Extensive description of supports offered to families, including making resources accessible for the identified population of students (E22-24).

Weaknesses:

The application provided limited and vague descriptions about the proactive and preventive professional development that will be provided to schools and educators

Reader's Score: 8

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 application included this section as part of the management plan which included a comprehensive, detailed, thorough outline in table format. The plan includes three goals, seven objectives, and 36 activities along with responsible project member, performance measures and timelines. The objectives and performance measures are clearly specified specified and measurable. The project outlines the program by district/school, educator, and parent levels and how they develop protective factors and outcomes

Weaknesses:

None.

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 gives local data that is then correlated to identified districts to target serving identified student populations. The identified target population southwestern United States underserved populations that have limited access to mental health supports, particularly students living in poverty, students of color, and students who are learning English (E25). Data includes a table detailing the mental health risk factors in NM middle schools specifically showing that 23 of the 33 counties have at least one suicidal risk factor exceeding the state average (E26).

Extensive details are shared on how the program is seeking to work with partners, including minority serving institutions, to strengthen program components to serve identified students and families (E25-27). Specifically, the project's MSI partner, NMSU, will review parental resources to identify and develop culturally responsive content to specifically meet the needs of Hispanic families, rural communities, and southwestern schools (E26) which can be a barrier for students accessing mental health supports.

Sub

> **Weaknesses:**

None.

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 the following factor:

Reader's Score: 5

> **Sub**

1. (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:**

Highly qualified staff are identified to lead, design, implement and deliver program as described in bio's, resumes and vita's. Key staff are divided into the following teams Leadership, Design and Implementation, Evaluation and Medical Advisory Board. The Co-PD's descriptions show a varied background with Nellene Stevens having grant and project management experience while Kevin Skinner is a therapist that will work on supporting content creation.

> **Weaknesses:**

It appears the applicant included the organizations equal opportunity employer statement, and it is not clear how this statement is operationalized in practice. The application is ambiguous about how the organization strongly encourages protected classes to apply for all positions and is committed to diversity in the workforce or indicators of current diversity of staff.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 8

> **Sub**

1. (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.

Sub

> **Strengths:**
>
> The applicant clearly outlines responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. Multiple visuals (E29) including details are included and tie with the logic model. There are three goals, seven objectives and thirty-six activities outlined with responsible staff, timelines and performance measures included. The level of detail allows for disseminating the project into day to day tasks to demonstrate the project is being completed and meeting the program goals. As an example of thoroughness of the details and written using SMART metrics, goal one, objective one, states "By October 31, 2024, work with NMSU experts to improve existing content and develop at least 3 new ParentGuidance.org (PG) courses that are culturally and linguistically responsive for Hispanic and rural populations."
>
> **Weaknesses:**
>
> In addition to CCHC personnel costs outlined, CCHC is also "charging" the grant routine and regular fees for the program delivery to schools and families as a contractual agreement. It is unclear how there is not a duplication of services being charged to the grant, i.e., personnel expenses that are covered by program fees also being added to the personnel line. While there are many details about when content will be delivered to educators and families, there is limited explanation or details on who will provide the delivery of the educator and parent content as a contract service making it unclear if it is a duplication of services in grant costs.

> **Reader's Score:** 8

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 5 points)

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:
   (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
   (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
   (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

   Strengths:

   New Mexico State University is included in the grant as a partner. A letter of support (E118-119) is included in the application which confirms their partnership and that they are a MSI (Hispanic Serving Institution).

   Weaknesses:

   None.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

   Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student

**Learning
(up to 2 points)**

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/13/2023 06:13 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	26
	Sub Total	30	26
	Total	30	26

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)

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: 26

> **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 evaluation plan is designed to meet the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations (page e33). Included in the plan is an external evaluator (Evaluation and Training Institute or ETI) who has experience in similar programs. The evaluation will be conducted in 76 schools with an average cluster size of 15 teachers. The plan includes formative evaluation, implementation evaluation activities, and impact assessments. The focus of the plan is on goal attainment, program effectiveness, and program appeal. Included is an early phase project that will serve as a means of identifying areas of weakness relative to data, decision making, responsiveness, and needs of the participants. The applicant will use a mixed method research design that will use observational data from meetings and field observations as well as data sources such as monthly reports concerning the program implementation. The plan includes a number of surveys that focus on school climate, staff implementation of social and emotional learning activities, a social and emotional learning belief scale, a perception of youth mental health, a parent empowerment and efficacy measure, and a mental health literacy scale (appendix J, page e151-152). The applicant explains it will seek to minimize attrition with periodic reminders and ongoing engagement of the participants. Both the treatment and control groups will receive financial incentives to encourage their continued involvement.

> **Weaknesses:**

> It is unclear from the information provided what level of attrition is expected and what action will take place if the attrition is either too high or too low. In addition, it is unclear how the applicant will also control for any potential bias associated with the changes and attrition or implementation. Also unclear is if the treatment and control groups will be matched or unmatched. It is unclear how the applicant will use the outcomes of the surveys on social and emotional learning, parent empowerment, and mental health in addressing the WWC standards.

> **Reader's Score:**   16

> 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:

The applicant indicates that regular reporting will be available and reviewed by the project on a quarterly basis to determine success levels for meeting their goals and for conducting the program appropriately (page e 35). The early feasibility study will also provide information and data that will allow the project staff to adjust activities and services for the following years. In addition to the feasibility studies that will identify problems and issues, the applicant will also conduct quarterly surveys and interviews of stakeholders such as parents (page e34). Such surveys are designed to improve the project staff's understanding of the partnerships and the processes needed to ensure full implementation of the program.

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

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 clearly identifies the components, mediators, and outcomes of the project through the use of its logic model (page e141). The model includes a description of the inputs, activities, and outputs of the project. The components are consistent with the project design and illustrate how they interact with each other to achieve short-term and long-term outcomes. The model also identifies the potential effects that are modified by the mediators and mediating variables at the individual level (e.g., gender, race, or ethnicity) and the cluster level (e.g., urban characteristics) (page e36). The information on the logic model includes outputs that have specific numbers and percentages of anticipated change for the project that will enable them to have measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation.

Weaknesses:

No weakness found.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/28/2023 11:23 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	25
	Sub Total	30	25
	Total	30	25

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cook Center for Human Connection, L3C (S411C230020)

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: 25

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 evaluation presented has strong potential to meet the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards. The applicant has identified the Evaluation and Training Institute (ETI) as the external evaluator for this project which will abide by Institutional Review Board (IRB) processes to collect data (pg. e11). The evaluation goals, objectives, and activities on page e31 state to evaluate using a clustered randomized controlled trial (RCT) utilizing 80 schools divided into 40 for each cohort. The external evaluator will also be responsible for fidelity checks on the execution of the project. (pg. e32) The outcomes identified to be measured for impact are educator perceptions of student mental health and social emotional learning (SEL), understanding and practice, and parent's confidence in addressing their child's SEL and mental health. (pg. e36) Pre-program data will be collected to control for sampling bias with moderator variables also controlled (e.g. gender, race/ethnicity, school urbanicity). (pg. e36) A two-level clustered RCT power analysis revealed that a minimum of 76 schools with 15 clustered teachers are needed to produce detectable effect sizes. (pg. e37) The application also presents numerous ways they will control attrition in the evaluation study including periodic reminders, data collection simplicity, and financial incentives. (pg. e38)

   Weaknesses:

   It is unclear which What Works Clearinghouse protocol will be used to evaluate this proposal to determine if the effectiveness study will meet the WWC standards. Using the Systematic Review Protocol for Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions, the data collection method for student SEL is not listed as an approved domain and outcome. Additionally, understanding and practice for teachers is not identified as an acceptable outcome, nor is parental confidence in student SEL and mental health. If the applicant is using the teacher training, evaluation, and compensation protocol, there are not enough details provided in the narrative to determine if the outcome and data collection will be acceptable under the social-emotional learning/behavior domain. Therefore, it is unclear if the outcomes presented will be acceptable under the WWC review protocols mentioned which would enable the study to meet standards.

   Reader's Score: 15

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:

   The applicant's methods of evaluation to provide performance feedback and periodic assessment are good. The applicant's goals, objectives, and activities identify that during the pilot, the external evaluator will conduct a formative evaluation for iterative development of instruments, refine data collection techniques, and assist in program refinements. (pg. e32)

   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:

   On page e35, the applicant states that the target year threshold for participation will be 90% of the treatment schools and 75% of the educators will participate in professional development training, however, they also indicate that the final implementation thresholds will be determined at the end of the pilot year of the project.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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