

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:13 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	26
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	9
Sub Total	70	64
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	4
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	4
Total	77	68

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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:

The applicant clearly demonstrates the significance of the proposed project . The project will address the challenges of equity and access for high-need students and apply appropriate professional development and coaching to support rural educators as they implement social-emotional learning (SEL) in schools. The results of the project will include an innovative, multi-tiered coaching model. These efforts will address the significant needs of the rural populations identified. (Pages e19- e23)

The project will implement the Second Step Elementary social-emotional curriculum . This curriculum is a 20-lesson SEL program that is research-based. This curriculum will be used as the basis for the proposed program. (Pages e19- e23)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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: 26

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 supports a strong conceptual framework with an appropriate Logic Model. The framework includes activities such as identifying assets, needs and barriers, developing data collection, establishing baseline measures, providing training and implementing the program in a pilot school. This framework has the potential to support the implementation of the Second Step curriculum with fidelity and improve academic and social outcomes for students. (Pages e24 and e105)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

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 outlines four goals that are specific and measurable. For example, goal four of the proposed project is to evaluate the effect of the implementation of Second Step Elementary digital curriculum on high-needs rural students' academic achievement, attendance, social-emotional competency, classroom behavior, perceptions of school climate and disciplinary referrals. (Page e24 - e26 and e213 - e216)

The applicant demonstrates that the proposed project will be based on several specific and measurable objectives that are clearly aligned to the goals and the objectives. For example, to address the goal of evaluating the effects of a professional development program, an objective will be to develop a fidelity of implementation tool to measure and analyze the relationship between the training and the coaching that occurs. (Page e25)

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicates that 20 teachers will be in the pilot; however, in the performance measure 2c the applicant indicates that 40 teachers will be targeted. It is unclear how the proposed objectives will be reaching 40 teachers and how these teachers will be selected. (Performance Measure 2c. Page e213)

Some of the outcomes that are identified are not written with a measurable component.

For example, the outcome for Program 3 Goal 4: "Updates to the project design based on the external evaluation," is not specific or measurable. (Page e25)

Reader's Score: 3

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 demonstrates clearly the needs of the target population; both the students and teachers have significant needs. Student demographics demonstrate need based on not only rural, isolated situations but also low social-economic levels and low academic levels. (Pages e26 - e29) The student needs will be addressed through the implementation of the interventions planned as part of the proposed project including the use of the Second Step curriculum.

The applicant clearly demonstrates the needs of the teachers who serve the students in the target area. Those challenges include isolation and the higher number of teachers who are not fully certified in the areas in which they teach and the lack of quality staff development and coaching. The implementation structure of the proposed

Sub

project will address these barriers by using a tiered coaching program, including virtual learning. (Page e29)

Weaknesses:

Although the needs identified included the issue that not all of the teachers serving the students were fully certified to serve the populations, the proposed project does not provide any pathways to increase the number of teachers that are fully certified in the area that they are teaching.

Reader's Score: 13

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: 9

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 demonstrates that the agency encourages applications for trainers and lead positions from persons who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented by using the nine strategies outlined in the Regional Education Lab-Northwest for recruiting, hiring and retaining diverse teachers. The applicant will also leverage the partnership with Texas State University (TXST) to support project recruitment. TXST is a minority serving college. (Page e32-e33)

The applicant describes the key personnel serving in the leadership roles. Those individuals have appropriate and relevant training and experience both in education and leadership roles. Several of the key personnel have had previous grant implementation work. (Pages e32- e33 and e49- e95)

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicates that key personnel will include Behavior Specialists; however, the applicant does not identify a job description that includes not only job duties but required training and recommended qualifications. Without that information it is difficult to determine if that position will be filled with an individual who has relevant training and experience. (Pages e32-e33 and e173)

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 adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 9

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:

The management plan provides appropriate and detailed timelines and milestones for the proposed project. The detailed management plan provides adequate guidelines to complete the project on time and within budget. (Page e35 and e133 - e146)

The time commitments of the Key Personnel are appropriate to address the size and scope of the proposed project. For example, the co-principal investigator will commit .5 FTE during years one and two. (Pages e32- e33)

Weaknesses:

The applicant labels the persons responsible as "all PD's" but does not clarify who that involves. It appears there are four PD's. Clarity as to the persons responsible for each task would ensure that the proposed project component is completed on time and within budget. (Page e138)

Reader's Score: 9

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 indicates that the leadership team connects with Texas State University which is a Minority Serving Institution. (Page e19) One of the key personnel is an assistant professor at TXST. (Page e61) The Texas State University will work with the partners to develop and test the Second Step digital curriculum. (Page e98)

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include a Memorandum of Understanding with TXST. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the extent of the involvement of the Minority-serving institution.

Reader's Score: 4

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:

Did not apply.

Weaknesses:

Did not apply.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:13 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	69
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	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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:

The applicant proposes to implement Project Second Step® to meet the social emotional needs of 1,200 high needs students enrolled in grades kindergarten through grade five who attend geographically isolated rural schools with 50%-80% free and reduced lunch (p. e15). To support the selection of the schools, the applicant included a table, which identified and documented the school district selection (including comparison district) by Locale, Free & Reduced Lunch, Ethnicity and percent with Individual Education Plan (IEP). Districts identified for the project had a range of 49% to 71% free lunch and a diverse population that ranged from 73% to 94% White (p. e132).

The project proposes to address the research that documents that students in rural schools located in impoverished areas score significantly lower than their more adequately resourced rural, suburban, and urban peers. In addition, they are also exposed to a higher rate of trauma, neglect, poverty, and abuse. They are also more likely to be diagnosed with a disability but have limited access to necessary and appropriate instructional accommodations to meet their specific needs (p. e20).

As such, the proposed project will implement Second Step®, a curriculum which supports the evidence that social emotional learning interventions assist in decreasing such factors as behavioral problems, emotional distress, substance abuse, and school drop-out. The multi-tiered coaching project will use the strengths inherent in rural areas to support implementation of the Second Step® curriculum to determine effectiveness of activities in the five identified high-need rural school districts.

In addition, because professional development opportunities are often less available in rural communities, the project will focus on providing experienced expert coaches to support rural educators. The applicant proposes to implement a coaching model, a well-documented professional development approach, which involves in-classroom support by an experienced support team member (p. e21- e23). The applicant also provided a detailed organization chart and resumes of the coaches who have extensive experience in social emotional learning interventions and coaching who will provide support to school district instructional staff (pp. e49 - e79).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 applicant provided a succinct description of the conceptual framework that has proven successful in addressing the social emotional challenges experienced by high needs students through implementation of the Second Step® curriculum that uses coaching to support rural instructors in the classroom. A detailed chart provided a pictorial description of the framework and included three components: Organic Coaching Support, Coaching Results, and Project Results. Each component was supported by the identification of strategies, activities and individuals involved in each activity. For example, the following information was provided to further explain the Second Step® Coaching conceptual framework: Organic Coaching Supports – Strategies included SEL Instruction & Interactive Weekly Lessons; Coaching Results identified Teacher improvements in Modeling SEL Competencies as a strategy; and Project Results identified expected outcomes as increases in Fidelity of Implementation and Perceptions of school climate” (p. e130).

The chart also identified Potential Mediators (i.e., Fidelity of implementation, Teacher knowledge), and Potential Moderators (i.e., Race/ethnicity, Gender, and Special education status) to support the documentation of the conceptual framework (p. e130).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 a detailed description of the goals and objectives of the proposed project accompanied by the identification of measures to evaluate expected outcomes. The goals were identified based on the specific challenges that rural schools experience in the implementation of social emotional learning interventions. For example, for Goal 2 -- Identify pilot training and coaching that are needed to support teacher implementation of Second Step® with fidelity, a supportive measurable Objective, 2.3, stated “Pilot test training and coaching materials with rural teachers.” A related Measure for the objective was identified as Implementation & Coaching Logs with an expected Outcome -- Process 1: Iterative analysis of program implementation (p. e24 - e26).

Sub

The identified specific measures to track project activities should facilitate ongoing monitoring of implementation activities to determine effectiveness and achievement of outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 sound description of the appropriateness of the proposed implementation strategies to meet the needs of the target population--high need students enrolled in rural school districts. The curriculum, Second Step®, and accompanying project model were specifically designed to determine the effectiveness of the coaching method to meet the needs of the target population by addressing the challenges often faced by rural school districts. Successful implementation of social emotional learning interventions is often deleteriously impacted due to such factors as the increased levels of such factors as trauma, abuse, neglect, school dropout and the lack of appropriate professional development for classroom teachers (p. e15, p. e24). To address these needs, the applicant proposes a three-phase (development, implementation, and sustainability) multi-tiered coaching program that considers the value of both strengths and challenges of rural communities to support implementation of a documented evidence-based social-emotional learning curriculum.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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: 9

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 provided a comprehensive summary that described the process to be implemented to facilitate employment applications from diverse underrepresented individuals and indicated that the team includes individuals who reflect the gender, ethnicity, disability status and sexual orientation of the targeted rural schools. In addition,

Sub

Regional Education Lab strategies for recruiting, hiring, and retaining diverse teachers will be used to encourage submission of applications from underrepresented groups of individuals (p. e32).

To further document the qualifications of key project personnel, the applicant provided a concise and focused summary of the expertise and experience of each of the key project personnel and included a curriculum vitae for each team member, a Loading Chart, and an Organization Chart for Project Second Step®. For example, the Principal Investigator for the project will oversee overall project implementation, including monitoring and reporting of activities. Her resume documented her expertise and leadership experiences in social-emotional learning and behavioral supports, intervention, special education programs and her work with rural school districts (pp. e32, p. e49 - e51).

In addition, the applicant also provided a concise description of the certified Behavior Specialist (.20FTE) for the proposed project. The Behavior Specialist will observe program implementation, support coaching of lead teachers and participate in monthly meetings to support project implementation (pp. e33 - e34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide a detailed description of the recruitment and retention strategies to be implemented to ensure a qualified certified behavioral specialist is identified to serve as a key team member for the proposed project.

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 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:

The applicant provided an exhaustive description of the highly detailed management plan to be implemented to achieve project outcomes. The plan was supported and documented with an organization chart, which defined roles and assigned personnel (p. e133). Additional support was provided by the inclusion of two tables of the project objectives, timelines, and milestones that documented the sequence and specificity of project activities inclusive of responsible personnel. For example, for the Objective, "Identify pilot training and coaching that are needed to support teachers implementing Second Step® with fidelity," annual activities included weekly team meetings with coaches (p. e134). A second table identified a task analysis of the activities and provided the timelines and responsible individuals (i.e., Activity: Develop and maintain ongoing collaboration with partner school districts; Personnel: All Project Directors & Coaches; Timeline: Ongoing throughout the project (p. e137).

A relevant logic model also identified aims, research questions to be answered, inputs and related activities and short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes. For example, under the Input of High Quality Research and

Sub

Evaluation Team, one of the activities identified is to Measure fidelity of implementation of teachers implementing the Second Step® program, student outcomes, and school climate outcomes. Examples of outcome statements included: Short-term Outcomes--Increased attendance; Mid-term Outcomes--Increased student academic achievement; and Long-term Outcomes--Increased life success (e.g., stable employment, better mental health) for students (pp. e105 - e106).

The comprehensive description of the management plan that includes detailed goals, objectives, timelines, milestones, supported by the relevant logic plan that identifies the resources, activities, and desired outcomes provide a specific roadmap that will facilitate implementation and monitoring of the proposed project activities to enhance achievement of successful outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 is partnering with Texas State University, identified by NIA as a minority-serving institution (Hispanic), located in San Marcos, Texas to implement the proposed project. An Assistant Professor at Texas State University will serve as a Co-Lead Coach under the leadership of the Co-Principal Investigator for Coaching (Organization Chart-p. e133; Curriculum Vitae/pp. e62 - e66).

The applicant also provided additional documentation of the partnership with Texas State University and included a Budget Justification for the University (i.e., Direct Costs—Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, and Indirect Costs (pp. e200 - e201). The approved Federal Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, signed by the Chief Research Officer, was also included for Texas State University (p. e117 - e121).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:04 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:09 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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	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	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	3
Total	77	71

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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:

The applicant demonstrates a rationale to develop a program that will advance the existing generalized research on the benefits of universal social-emotional learning (SEL), specifically in rural settings. While there is substantiated evidence for universal SEL instruction in school, the applicant notes that there is a dearth of research that is developed with and for rural schools (p. e20). The applicant posits that this lack of research is particularly relevant due to the unique challenges faced by school districts in rural areas (p.e21). Other relevant research informing the project includes findings that support "the use of coaching as a method for promoting high-quality curricular implementation." The project proposes to address the need for primary research in rural settings by integrating professional development and coaching support to reduce barriers to curricular instruction. The applicant will first identify barriers to implementation, and then develop and test a coaching model to determine if there is an increase in fidelity of implementation leading to improved student and teacher outcomes. Through use of a school - university partnership, the proposed project will utilize a professional development and coaching model designed specifically to address unique support needs present in rural areas, such as access, human capital and geographic limitations as well as capitalizing upon rural strengths (pp.e20-e22).

Effective strategies to support rural students are of considerable importance, as the applicant highlights that research shows that students in rural schools when compared to their non-rural peers are more likely to be exposed to childhood abuse, neglect and trauma, to live in poverty, and to be diagnosed with a disability. In addition, they are less likely to have access to appropriate services and intervention. (p. e20).

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 applicant has a conceptual framework integrating SEL instruction, coaching models, and support from school staff. They outline the short-term expected teacher improvement, student gains, and the long-term expected results of teacher increased Fidelity of Intervention (FOI) and improved perception of school climate. Long-term expected student results include increase in several measures, as well as decrease in disciplinary referrals and suspensions (p. e130).

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 has detailed goals and objectives, and includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to measure their outcomes. Through the use of validated instruments such as the Devereaux Students Strengths Assessment, the Social-Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale (SECTRS), the Georgia Student Health Survey: Elementary Survey (GSHS), and the Behavioral Observation of Students in Schools (BOSS), the project staff will measure constructs such as increased social-emotional competency, increased positive ratings of school climate, increased teacher knowledge and efficacy.

Through focus groups, teacher self-reports and activity logs, the project staff will measure fidelity of implementation (p. e37-e42). Utilizing data collected from staff reports and observations, the coaching model will be developed to support removal of barriers to the fidelity of implementation.

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 utilizes existing research supported practices such as SEL programming and coaching with an iterative model designed to identify barriers to fidelity of implementation and to provide supports that are aligned with the unique needs of rural school districts. The schools involved in the project are representative of the challenges of many rural schools, which include teacher shortages, an increase in students experiencing poverty, food insecurity, adverse childhood experiences. The addition to the coaching and professional development component will address the challenges staff in rural schools experience with their staff shortages and staff working under non-traditional or emergency certification, as well as the lack of accessibility of traditional professional development (p.e26).

Sub

The applicant will provide a coaching model that will include both face-to-face and online coaching. The applicant justifies the coaching model with research that indicates that “because rural schools have a strong sense of community and relationships are central, having lack of access to curriculum specialists and instructional coaches in rural localities can be addressed by side-by-side coaching using video recordings, and individualized feedback from expert coaches who are not employed by the district (Clark et al., 2022)” (p.e23).

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 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:

The extent to which the organization is committed to practices to encourage applicants from traditionally underrepresented groups is documented in both the narrative (p. e32) as well as on p. e222. The applicant also indicates it will “leverage our partnership with Texas State University (TXST), which is a minority-serving institution, to support project recruitment” (p.e32, p. e222). The applicant notes that their “team includes members who represent the diversity of our rural schools with respect to gender, ethnicity, disability status, and sexual orientation” (p.e32).

The resumes for the positions of the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigators, Coaches, the Lead Evaluator and Co-Principal Investigator and the independent evaluation team are included by the applicant (p. e49-e95). The resumes demonstrate that the staff is highly qualified, as evidenced by the relevant training, experience and credentials listed. For example, “the project team includes nationally recognized experts in social-emotional learning, coaching and intervention implementation, assessment and evaluation, school administration and program implementation (p. e32).

Weaknesses:

The applicant notes that the role of “behavior specialist” will bring experience providing intervention and coaching, collecting data, and conducting assessments in school settings. However, the applicant does not address the specific education, expertise or qualifications of this role. This role is listed as a 0.25 FTE role, doing direct teaching of the SEL curriculum. The applicant fails to make clear how they will handle school districts that may define the role differently, therefore it is difficult to assess the level of consistency and effectiveness likely to be achieved by program staff. (pp. e142, e161).

Sub

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:

The applicant has a clearly defined progression for implementation over five years (p.e29). The applicant has developed tables of detailed timelines and milestones and management plan objectives (p.e134-140). The applicant has thorough documentation of responsibilities of each team member, with a clear description of the time allocated to each task (p e141-e146). The person-loading table reflects the expected tasks and needs for each phase of development. For example, the Co-Principal Investigator and Research Scientist will complete their commitment to the project in years 1 and 2, and the positions of Instructional Designer UX/UI Designer Editor will be added in year 2. Coaches will scale back time dedicated to the project in later years as the districts scale up training and begin implementing the "train-the-trainer" model (144-146).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

The applicant has submitted both a letter of support and contractual documentation from TXST as an implementation partner. Additionally, the applicant states that they will leverage their partnership with TXST to support their project

recruitment (pp. e16, e19, and e222). Additionally, one of the coaches in the project is a current instructor at TXST (p. e62).

Weaknesses:

While the applicant has included TXST in their budget, contractual documentation, and indicates that they will be recruiting from TXST, aside from one instructor holding the role of a project coach, it is unclear the degree to which personnel from TXST will be contributing to and influencing the program design and implementation (p. e33).

Reader's Score: 3

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:

CCP 2 not addressed.

Weaknesses:

CCP 2 not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:09 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/06/2023 05:06 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

Reader #1: *****

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

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 5: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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 applicant proposes to conduct a summative evaluation of the intervention using experimental techniques that are consistent with WWC with reservation standards. The quasi-experiment includes a treatment condition (Second Step) and with a business-as-usual control with its own SEL curricular component (page e38), which is a strength over using a "strawman" control. The evaluation use of four schools, 80 teachers, and 1,200 students allows it to examine potential mediating variables with sufficient power (page e37). Recognizing that using random assignment at school level with only four schools is underpowered, they plan to use a propensity-scoring approach to address this issue, an approach that is consistent with WWC standards for this type of scenario.

The evaluation plan includes a table that clearly identifies the evaluation questions and the associated data sources to address them (page e37). The applicant provides sufficient evidence that their data sources are valid and reliable including citations that document their established use in the research literature (page e37). The applicant's decision to use DESSA seems like a good choice for measuring students' social-emotional competencies (page e38).

A strength of the applicant's choice of data sources is that they represent a wide-range of grain sizes, from observational and assessment data about individual students to a measure of classroom-level behavior (pages e36-40). The fidelity of implementation measures (FOIs) are appropriate and will provide clear formative data (page e41). Another strength is the applicant's recognition of the issue of missing data and proposing an imputation approach that is consistent with best practices (page e38).

The proposed multilevel modeling approach is consistent with educational evaluation best practices involving nested data (page e41). The applicant provides several power analyses that demonstrate that the proposed evaluation will provide sufficient power to find a minimally-detectable effect size (MDES) of approximately 0.2, which is reasonable for this type of study and consistent with WWC standards (pages e41-42).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The evaluation plan does not account for attrition, joiners, or lack of baseline equivalence in their design. The evaluation plan does not account for the realities of attrition in educational evaluations of the type the applicant proposes. In fact, the only acknowledgment of attrition is in one of the applicant's power analyses and is simply stated without an accompanying explanation for that value that was used (page e42). A stronger proposal would include a concrete plan for monitoring attrition. One of the evaluation criteria for cluster-level assignment studies is a plan that addresses the risk of bias due to individuals entering clusters. This possibility of joiners is not accounted for in the proposed evaluation plan, which undermines its ability to meet WWC standards. A stronger applicant would document how baseline equivalence would be satisfied using individual-level standard deviations.

A stronger proposal would also clearly identify how the applicant intends to address missing or imputed for any baseline measures as well as a clear plan for limiting the potential bias from imputed outcome data (page e38).

Reader's Score: 17

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 proposes to monitor implementation fidelity during the evaluation using several approaches, which is consistent with best practices (page e42). First, they plan to use quarterly logs as a quantitative FOI data source, which they will use to identify teachers that are not meeting the applicant's expectations and remediating them. Second, they plan to use annual focus groups to generate qualitative FOI data from a range of perspectives including teachers, school administrators, and project staff. The plan to examine these three perspectives for FOI data is very sensible. Third, the applicant will also examine student and teacher outcome data to help round out the FOI data. These components contribute to a strong formative evaluation.

Weaknesses:

One area of concern is the applicant's plan to implement changes to the intervention because of evidence derived from the FOI data. They suggest, "if FOI is low, targeted training can be conducted with those teachers to increase fidelity" (page e42) Obviously, additional training would represent an alteration to the intervention and thus could undermine the evaluation's internal validity. A stronger application would acknowledge this threat to internal validity and identify safeguards to help address it. The plan would also benefit from a plan of monitoring ongoing attrition and plans for addressing potential differential attrition across treatment and control.

A stronger application would clearly identify the criteria for judging the level of FOI, a plan for documenting any resulting deviations from standard practice, and a plan for accounting for any changes in the overall formative evaluation (page e42).

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 applicant clearly identifies an appropriate set of moderating variables. The applicant proposes to explore them using multilevel structural equation modeling, which is consistent with best practices (page e43).

Sub

Weaknesses:

A stronger proposal would discuss how they plan to derive the dosage and adherence score used as the measurable threshold for acceptable implementation (page e43). It would be helpful to know what variables will be included and how the final score will be calculated. A stronger proposal would also provide a clear empirical basis for the selected moderating variables to document their source (page e43).

Reader's Score: **3**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/06/2023 05:06 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/04/2023 06:10 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

Reader #2: *****

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

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 5: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Wood County SSA/Mineola ISD (S411C230049)

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 selected outcome measures in the quasi-experimental design appear to demonstrate face validity and reliability, and are not over-aligned in accordance with WWC standards, and data collection plans are consistent (e39-e41). The proposal includes a robust mix of quantitative and qualitative measures.

The sample size would include 1200 students and 80 teachers, half in the Second Step program and half in business-as-usual SEL programming (e37). Four participating schools will be randomly assigned to the treatment or control groups (e38). The evaluator will utilize sequential modeling imputation to address missing data (e38).

Independent data collectors will use a standardized behavioral observation tool (BOSS) to observe students in all classrooms (e39). The evaluator will collect reliability data during direct observations and compare against the independent evaluators and teacher self-report (e41).

Process studies will inform both continuous program improvements and future replicability (e36).

The third-party evaluator has experience with EIR project reviews (e36).

Weaknesses:

The control group will utilize "business as usual" SEL programming. It is unclear if there is an existing defined SEL program in these schools or if programming is teacher-designed and varying significantly across the control group classrooms (e37).

Applicant states that due to a small sample (4 schools), evaluator will conduct a multi-level propensity score to establish baseline equivalence, which is acceptable for WCC. However, the evaluation plan does not identify the relevant characteristics to be used in establishing baseline equivalence, as required by WWC.

Sub

Reader's Score: 17

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 is designed to be iterative, with changes made in each phase based on information from the prior implementation phase (e29). The evaluator will attend monthly meetings with the project team to discuss barriers to implementation and outcome impact. The evaluator will also conduct quarterly focus groups with teachers and administrators. Student outcome data will be collected and analyzed annually (e42).

WestED will analyze logs for fidelity of implementation and identify teachers “not implementing at acceptable levels,” and in need of additional support (e42), thus supporting continuous improvement.

Weaknesses:

Fidelity is defined as weekly dosage and adherence of 90% (e43). It was unclear what a weekly dosage would be (e.g. time, number of lessons, classes). Likewise, adherence is also unclear, whether this is adherence to a schedule, or lesson format.

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 key components of the plan are clear, developing a coaching model that reduces barriers and supports the implementation of a digital SEL program, with high fidelity in rural schools, ultimately improving student educational and SEL outcomes (e24-e25).

The proposed plan addresses mediator questions pertaining to teacher knowledge and fidelity impacting outcomes, as well as assessing any differential impacts by the demographics of students (e37).

The evaluator will collect academic and behavioral data, as well as demographics for students, directly from school records (e38). Teachers will complete a standardized strengths assessment (DESSA) rating student social-emotional competencies at the beginning and end of school year for all students. Evidence of reliability and validity was provided (e39).

Independent data collectors will use a standardized behavioral observation tool (BOSS) to observe students in all classrooms (e39). The evaluator will collect reliability data during direct observations and compare against the independent evaluator's and teacher self-report (e41).

Teacher logs will measure dosage, adherence and adaptation. This information will be used to create teacher profiles based on implementation, and subsequent sub-group analysis based on teacher implementation profiles (e43).

Student perceptions of school climate will be measured using the Georgia Health Student Survey. Evidence of reliability and validity was provided (e40).

Teacher knowledge of social and emotional learning will be measured using a SEL competency rating scale (SECTRS), aligned with CASEL. Evidence of reliability was provided across the competency subscales (e40).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The proposal states that the evaluator, WestEd, will use digital analysis from the Second Step software to “explore how students and teachers are using the program.” However there is no further detail provided about what information will be examined to measure the fidelity of implementation (e.g. time using software, lesson completion, etc.) (e41).

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/04/2023 06:10 PM