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

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/09/2023 09:52 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)
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	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	66
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	71

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)

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 build upon the applicant's existing history of providing STEM programming for marginalized high school students, proposing to implement, evaluate, and refine its existing model to focus on exposing Black, Latine, and Native students to CS and provide access to resources that help students navigate paths toward CS-focused academic and career paths. This approach includes a focus on project-based learning, networking with diverse CS professionals and faculty, building a community of peers for discussion of topics relating to social-emotional and well-being, and engagement with a digital platform in which students are introduced to role models in the CS field who will help them navigate paths to becoming CS majors and professionals (e19-20). The applicant plans to include a 3-week summer CS exposure experience in addition to a digital platform expanding access to CS-specific college and career readiness resources to serve predominantly low-income and first-generation underrepresented high school students of color. Five university sites are partnering with the applicant in this effort (e 21-22).

    This project is significant in that it provides training, support, and guidance to students who are underrepresented in CS, helping to develop CS identity and persistence. This is important for growing an essential workforce while guiding students who may have lacked such guidance previously toward lucrative careers in CS. Connecting the high school students directly to community colleges through CS college and career pathways is significant as the approach serves to bridge a connection at a point where underserved students are particularly at risk of turning away from such pathways.

    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: 26

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 draws upon theories of culturally relevant pedagogy in the development of its interventions and the training of its staff (e23). This is important for establishing programming that engages students of color in computing. The applicant also roots its training in asset-based pedagogy, which emphasizes growth mindset and confidence building in attainment of new skills. This is important in the field of CS where many students may have feelings of inadequacy in approaching CS content. These approaches collectively support academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes. In learning activities, the applicant proposes to apply project-based learning which will help students make important connections across disciplines that link experiences to careers.

   Weaknesses:

   The applicant does not provide a clear conceptual framework for CS education.

   Reader's Score: 6

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 established three goals that are relevant and appropriate for the project. These goals focus on building the capacity of staff to implement related programming, improving student engagement and persistence in CS, improving social-emotional outcomes, and the evaluation, refinement, and implementation of the newly, upgraded platform to be established for the project (e25-28). Each goal is further broken down into three to seven objectives, each with correlated outcomes which are specific and measurable.
   The applicant provides a well-organized logic model that clearly defines project inputs, activities, short-term outcomes, and mid/long-term outcomes that are in alignment with the applicant's goals and objectives, providing further evidence of a well-defined project focused on supporting students in persisting in efforts along CS career pathways (e101).

   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 leads its goals with building the capacity of staff. This is essential to project success as it is essential to train educators in hands-on culturally relevant project-based CS instruction and in supporting the social-emotional well-being of students. In the development of the digital platform, which includes college and career readiness for CS pathways, the applicant plans to develop a preparatory CS course to mitigate the challenge students who have lacked such exposure may face in mitigating a steep learning curve. This will be helpful to students in developing

understanding of core CS principles and computational thinking/coding in a project-based learning format, which establishes a culture of student collaboration (e27-28). This program will be aligned with AP CS Principles. To support the marginalized students the project proposes to serve, CS workshops will be held to engage students in research and problem solving to build solutions while understanding ethical considerations. Pitch competitions will be held for students to present their projects to a wider national community and a team of judges in entrepreneurship and/or venture capital. This level of a public showcase is impactful in elevating the work of students. It helps to empower students as they realize the potential of their work through the eyes of others. Pairing this with collaborations of a network of peers and networking with CS professionals with similar identities as proposed by the applicant, has great potential to elevate students' sense of self-efficacy, helping them to see themselves as CS professionals, setting them on pathways to careers they otherwise may not have considered.

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: 10

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's project team is broken down as follows: 50% Black and 30% Latine, 58% women, and 3% non-binary (e 30). This is indicative of hiring practices that support and encourage persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability (e 30). The members of this team also have clearly defined roles which are supported by extensive, relevant professional experience. Key project staff have provided resumes to provide detailed information regarding the extensive backgrounds, skill, and relevant expertise of project staff.

Since marginalized students are often discouraged in STEM due to a lack of diverse role models, the applicant indicates that the majority of facilitators and STEM professionals recruited for its project will be Black, Latine, Native, or women. This is important because students should see themselves reflected in computing to develop their own sense of belonging in computer science. The applicant plans to use this same approach in the selection of professionals for career videos supporting career-related exploration within the platform to be developed, demonstrating a firm commitment to the encouragement of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in CS (e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the 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 well-developed plan for project management to ensure that the proposed project activities are completed on time and within budget. A table of key milestones is provided that identifies the months of each year during which specific activities and actions will occur (e32-34). This table includes the responsibilities of the applicants' and its partner organizations' lead teams in accomplishing the milestones according to the timeline provided. A rollout timeline is also provided, which provides clarity in the management plan regarding the phases of implementation of the project, numbers and grade levels of students involved, and related program implementation and data collection timeframes (e35). This is important in that the timeline shared will help to ensure that the project activities are completed on schedule and that data gathered and discussions in project meetings may be used on an ongoing basis to inform continuous improvement, contributing to the ultimate success of the project.
    The applicant has provided a detailed, thorough budget that delineates project expenses (e189-190). Each university partner to be hosting project activities has provided a detailed budget that includes expenses that are appropriate and necessary to support project activities (e119-122, 137, 151-152, 165-166). These budgets along with associated narrative and agreements provide helpful clarity regarding the implementation and responsibilities of the applicant and its partner institutions.

    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:

Two partner colleges joining the applicant in this project are Historically Black Colleges (HBCUs). Morehouse College is a private historically Black liberal arts college for men (e140). Spellman college is also a historically black college and is considered a global leader in the education of women of African descent (e155).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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: 09/09/2023 09:52 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/09/2023 09:28 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	22
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	10
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
	Sub Total	70	57
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	62

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)

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: 15

    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 project proposal identifies a target population of Black, Latine, and Indigenous students who are underrepresented in the computer science (CS) field. The significance is supported by research indicating exposure to CS, not race/ethnicity, is the correlating factor to aptitude and interest in CS (e21). Further significance is demonstrated by the participation levels in rigorous CS coursework where the target population comprised only 25% of participants in AP CS with lower achievement rates compared to white counterparts (e20). A legacy, proprietary program will be implemented with a narrowed curricular focus from STEM to specifically CS (e21). The project proposal includes design features related to culturally relevant pedagogy and social-emotional learning objectives (e23). The proposal includes a broad spectrum of university partners with access to students across the United States (e22).

    Weaknesses:

    The integration of CS into the curriculum with a career pathways focus is not a new strategy. Additionally, the project relies on project-based learning as the primary pedagogical feature which as a widely researched topic is not specifically innovative (e22).

    Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 22

   Sub

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

   Strengths:

   The project design centers on five features: CS coursework, PBL pedagogy, career exposure, community building and collaboration, and access to digital technology platforms (e24). The applicant lists two theories as foundational aspects of the program: culturally responsive pedagogy and assets-based pedagogy. These pedagogical approaches reconcile the implementation goals related to a holistic approach to CS and student learning environments (e23).

   Weaknesses:

   The project does not identify specific activities that will be related to each of the foundational theories. There are suggested curricular features and strategies for career exposure; however, there is limited detail related to CRP and ABP. (e101).

   Reader's Score: 6

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 contains a detailed chart of objectives, outcomes (with threshold achievement goals), and accountability timelines. The outcomes are specifically detailed and include opportunities for revision and program iteration over two phases (e27).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses were 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 lead organization on the project has an established summer student camp experience and has coordinated sites that provide access for underrepresented student groups. The organization has been operating with a mission focusing on access for underrepresented students in STEM since 2001 (e105). The proposal initiates an introductory CS course using PBL instructional strategies (e28). The program also exposes students to CS industry professionals while building collaborations with peers in a residential summer program (e29).

   Weaknesses:

   The project identifies access to the digital platform but does not address online access for participants outside the summer camp experience or in-school experience during the academic year. The target population includes economically disadvantaged students who may not have reliable home internet connectivity to make the program truly equitable (e30). The innovative aspect of the proposed program seems limited to the inclusion of an introductory CS course in the established summer camp program of studies (e28).

   Reader's Score: 11

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: 10

> **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 organization leading the project details the diversity of key project personnel and also highlights how the team is representative of the target student population (e30). The oversight of the program will come from an outside non-profit that will provide some independent accountability for the established organization that will be implementing the program objectives via an established summer program (e31). Key personnel have experience administering the summer residential program and documentation is included that demonstrates existing, successful partnerships with university partner sites (e105).

> **Weaknesses:**

> No weaknesses were noted.

> **Reader's Score:** 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the 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 proposal includes detailed memoranda of agreements indicating a careful budget oversight and experience managing fiscal aspects of a program that has a national geographic footprint (e105). The proposal includes an annual program calendar with key activities and milestones (e118) . The proposal also includes a monthly breakdown of evaluation tasks (e58). The program provides a reasonable and detailed budget narrative (e189).

Sub

> **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were 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 project includes two HBCU partners that handle the site director responsibilities for the summer program (e205).

> **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were 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:**

NA

> **Weaknesses:**

NA

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/09/2023 09:28 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)
Reader #3:   **********

	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	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	66
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	71

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - EIR Early-Phase - 7: 84.411C

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

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)

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:

      This application proposes to implement SMASH 3.0, a comprehensive culturally responsive CS exposure program, designed to prepare underrepresented students to engage with computer science. This program is building on prior versions of SMASH that showed promising results. The innovation of this strategy lies in the design of the project providing access to high-quality CS courses, utilizing student-led project-based learning as a pedagogical approach (e22), focusing on components of CS identity development that led to CS persistence, and employing culturally responsive pedagogy (e23). In addition, it is clear how the program will provide a college bridge experience for students. Thus, the application presents a compelling case for how the approach could impact student participation, interest, and success in STEM through CS.

      Weaknesses:

      There were no weaknesses identified.

      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 literature supporting the key components of the proposed project are presented in the significance section of the narrative and provides a strong case for the logic model that was presented.

Weaknesses:

The conceptual framework for the proposed research is not clearly described, instead the application proposes a logic model (e24). It is unclear if there is additional theory or literature that would support the conceptual framing of the project.

Reader's Score: 6

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 provides goals, objectives, and outcomes that are clearly specified and measurable that it will seek to achieve through the project design.

Weaknesses:

There are no identified weaknesses.

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 project proposes to intentionally target marginalized communities to enter, persist, and succeed in the CS pipeline (e27). The proposed project is appropriate for the target population and is likely to successfully address the identified needs. The application proposes to include culturally responsive staff trainings, an introductory CS course, project-based learning tied to CS and ethics, building a CS peer network, exposing networks to those with similar identities, and providing a digital platform with access to CS college and career readiness resources.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

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: 10

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 diversity of the SMASH team reflects its' desire to encourage applications for employment from members of groups that are traditionally underrepresented. The key project personnel and organizations involved in the project appear to be well-qualified and capable of handling a project of this scope and size.

   Weaknesses:

   There are no identified weaknesses.

   Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the 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 application provides a clear plan for how the objectives will be achieved over time (e32-e33). It clearly defines the responsibility of project groups. This suggests the project team has clearly thought through how the plan will be carried out and how the team will manage the resources provided.

   Weaknesses:

   There were no identified 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 project team includes Morehouse College and Spelman College both identified as HBCUs as defined in the NIA. The partners appear to have collaborated before and have an established partnership that is likely to be successful.

Weaknesses:

There are no identified 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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/11/2023 09:58 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)
Reader #1: **********

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

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 7: 84.411C

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

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)

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: 30

    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 evaluators include an excellent evaluation plan that should produce evidence that would satisfy the requirements of the What Works Clearinghouse with Reservations. For example, the narrative identifies the well-developed matching and baseline equivalence processes that will ensure accurate comparisons to measure the impact of the project (p. e36). In addition, the narrative includes clear details regarding the valid and reliable data sources that will be used to provide evidence (p. e37). Also, the narrative includes details regarding the way missing data will be addressed and includes a sufficient sample size to detect an effect of the interventions (p. e38).

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses were noted.

    Reader's Score: 20

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 narrative includes an excellent description of means by which performance feedback will be collected and disseminated to project staff throughout the project. For example, the project proposes a pilot study which will be used to refine details for the full-scale implementation (p. e40). The evaluation includes many assessment opportunities that will provide meaningful data regarding implementation. For example, the evaluators will use multiple surveys throughout the project to gather feedback regarding project activities (p. e41 & e58).

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses were noted.

    Reader's Score: 5

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

   Strengths:

   The applicants have developed an excellent evaluation plan that provides a clear description of key project components. For example, the project clearly aligns activities and evaluation metrics to the impact of the program on participants attitudes and long-term college enrollment, which is the focus of the project (p. e34). The narrative clearly articulates the potential mediators that could impact the project outcomes (p. e62) and includes well-designed threshold measures to guide the implementation of the project (p. e68).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses were noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/28/2023 03:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)
Reader #2:   **********

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

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: MK Level Playing Field Institute (dba SMASH) (S411C230113)

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: **30**

    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 comprehensive evaluation plan is being done by an independent external evaluator with extensive experience and WWC certifications. The computer science intervention (SMASH 3.0) and student-level QED impact evaluation are sufficiently detailed to meet WWC standards.

   Strengths of the proposed plan include the use of valid and reliable measures (e37) aligned to the research questions and a well-articulated data collection plan (e176-178) specifying who is responsible for collecting data and when.

   The scale-up cohort model is extensively detailed and will allow for learning what works and improving the intervention's second, more expansive phase.

   Treatment and comparison groups are assured of meeting baseline equivalence standards through an intentional collection of relevant baseline data before the intervention begins and through statistical modeling. The inclusion of appropriate interaction terms will allow for the assessment of differential effects by high-need student groups, and the study is appropriately powered to detect minimum effect sizes even under missing data assumptions. Reasonable strategies for reducing missing data and non-response are offered (e37).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: **20**

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 plan for providing performance feedback on barriers and facilitators of implementation is rigorously detailed and includes early procurement of informed consent (IRB) and data sharing agreements, as well as multiple and diverse data sources for improving the project (e35) throughout the 5-year program. Evaluators will meet regularly to share qualitative and quantitative feedback reports using a plan-do-study-act cycle (e33).

The detailed implementation evaluation for the feasibility study (pilot phase) (e176), including analysis of program data and facilitator and student interviews, ensures that lessons learned will improve implementation in the study's second phase (e40).

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:

Key project components and aligned measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation are sufficiently detailed (e187). The relationship between activities, short-term and mediating outcomes are clearly specified in the model with a strong measurement plan aligned to each.

The plan to utilize National Student Clearinghouse for longitudinal tracking of long-term outcomes is an established and reliable method for college outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/28/2023 01:57 PM