

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2023 08:21 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need	20	15
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	23
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	25
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Resources	30	25
Sub Total	100	88
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	4
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Diverse Workforce	5	2
Sub Total	10	6
Total	110	94

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - TSL Panel - 4: 84.374A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.
- (iii) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.
- (iv) 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.

Strengths:

Overview:

The application demonstrates a need for the project in adequate ways. It identifies specific gaps/weaknesses in its services and how the project will build on existing efforts to improve outcomes. The proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning, however, limited on the success of addressing the needs of the target population.

Strengths:

- (i) The applicant has shown a need for the project by reference several gaps/weaknesses within their district. The district has a 70% teacher turnover rate, 40% of teachers are teaching out of their fields, and a lack of diversity in their teaching staff. In addition, the district has a high number of minority students with 90% of them being economically disadvantaged (e17-19)
- (ii) For this project, the Natchitoches SD will partner with the NIET (approved provider for best practice training in Louisiana) to develop formal teacher roles and develop a district-wide performance-based compensation system. NIET and the state will provide support for instructional leadership teams, teacher collaboration, teacher and principal standards and coaching and career pipeline development. (e17-19)
- (iii) The project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning. They are currently using NIET's teaching and learning standards rubric to support teacher growth. They intend to adopt NIET's Principal Standards Rubric to support school leader improvement. There will also be an incorporation of NIET's Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System and the TAP Leadership Handbook, Evaluation and Compensation Guide. NIET and TAP have been examined repeatedly and have been proven to have positive impacts on participants (e21-22)
- (iv) The project seeks to implement an evaluation system using valid and reliable rubrics for teachers and leaders, create formal leadership positions for teachers with strong instructional skills, establish collaborative professional learning for teachers and school leaders, develop a vision for enhancing HCMS district wide (e23).

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) Project plan does not prove how current funding streams will improve outcomes (e19-21).
- (iii) The applicant does not specifically explain how the use of NIETs teaching and learning standards rubric will support rigorous academic standards for students (e22).
- (iv) There is no data to support that the strategies will successfully address the needs of the target population (e19-21).

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**1. Quality of the Project Design (25 points)**

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:

- (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.**
- (ii) The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.**
- (iii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Strengths:

Overview:

The proposed project presents an adequate rationale. It includes a high-quality review of literature with an adequate plan for implementation, along with the use of methodological tools that will aid in the achievement of the proposed objectives.

Strengths:

- (i) The rationale for this project is, an increase in compensation along with an increase in support and leadership roles will result in improved recruitment and retention of effective, diverse educators and increase the effectiveness of both school leaders and educators. The project will use the TAP System, which has an extensive record in supporting high-need districts to improve student achievement. The TAP system provides multiple performance metrics, individual and group incentives, and regular feedback to teachers regarding performance (e24-25).
- (ii) The project provides a high-quality review of literature on the impact that the TAP System has had on school leaders, teachers, and student outcomes. The system focuses on reforming schools by focusing on support structures for teachers, which has shown to be highly effective in improving student achievement. The applicants discuss allowing effective teachers to model their effective instruction and mentor other teachers. These leadership roles have been proven to increase teacher and student outcomes, job satisfaction, effectiveness, student achievement and retention. Teacher learning and student achievement increase when professional development is teacher-led, ongoing, collaborative, and relevant. The projects strategies and key activities will be performed at both the district and school levels to ensure successful achievement of the project's objectives. (e26-37).
- (iii) The evaluation of the STRONG project will be led by NIET's Research and Evaluation Department, who has extensive experience in overseeing large-scale evaluations of education programs (e37). The evaluator will collaborate to provide grant partners with timely data to improve the project for the population being served and to assess the impacts of the program. The applicant's logic model states that if programmatic structures, trainings, and support systems are implemented at the district and school level to strengthen and align the district's HCMS, there will be positive outcome, including improved teacher and school leader effectiveness, and increased student achievement (e37-40).

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) No weaknesses noted.
- (iii) The applicant did not express how the logic model would affect student achievement (e.37, 52).

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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:

Overview:

The quality of the management plan is exceptional to achieve the objectives of the proposed project and remain within the desired budget. There is a clear timeline for the completion of tasks. The plan also reflects the roles and responsibilities of those who are to complete each task.

Strengths:

The project has clear milestones and tasks related to those milestones. The applicant wishes to establish project advisory committees, hire master teachers, deliver foundational training, deliver annual coaching and support, being TAP implementation for the 2023-24 school year, complete project monitoring and evaluation tasks and calculate and award performance-based compensation (e40-44).

The milestones are aligned with the Logic Model to focus on continuous improvement (e52).

The individual who has been selected for the project director role has more than 30 years of experience in education and was responsible for overseeing district-wide implementation of the TAP system in another Louisiana SD. The applicant will also hire a bookkeeper who will be responsible for the processing of monthly grant statements, payroll systems and reporting (e44-45).

The individuals who have been selected for leadership roles have both the experience and education, based on their resumes to aid in successful implantation of the project. (e55-65).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. Adequacy of Resources (30 points)

The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.
- (iii) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

Strengths:

Overview:

It is likely that the project will result in a system change because of key elements that already in place. Those elements include multiple district-level administrators who have experience successfully implementing the TAP System, school board and community leaders who are committed to the work, and district support in funding components of the work.

Strengths:

- (i) The STRONG project will create change in classroom practices through multiple measures of teaching and learning to provide the data to set goals and monitor progress, weekly collaboration meetings led by trained teacher leaders, and individual coaching for teachers. The project will provide school level change by using data to set goals, designing professional learning, and providing coaching and feedback. There will be district level change as a result as district leaders plan and deliver training to school leaders and use observation, feedback, and school visits to create a coherent message to principals about priorities and goals (e45-46).
- (ii) It is highly likely that the STRONG project will build capacity to address the needs of the school leaders, teachers, and students. NIET will support district leaders in improving practices and embedding them into existing structures and systems. NIET will work with the school board to identify high-impact action steps to improve instruction and provide coaching. NIET will also be responsible for providing professional learning and coaching to school and teacher leaders. The project will build leadership because teachers will attend meeting led NIET and master teachers will work together to calibrate their understanding of strong instruction which will create consistency across the district, build capacity at all levels and influence teachers to apply and continue their employment with Natchitoches Parish SD (e46-47).
- (iii) The applicant has demonstrated that there will be resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, evidenced by matching funds from the school district (e82) and contributions from NIET (e83).

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) No weaknesses noted.
- (iii) There is no multi-year financial and operating model noted (e66).

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students.

a. In one or more of the following educational settings:

- (1) Elementary school.
- (2) Middle school.
- (3) High school.
- (4) Career and technical education programs.

b. That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:

- (1) Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-of-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.
- (2) Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

Strengths:

Overview:

This applicant proposes a project that will promote educational equality in high needs schools for students in K-12 grades. These schools have high minority and low performance rates. The proposal seeks to increase access to high-quality educators who resemble the backgrounds of its students. The applicant did not address the educational inequities nor the approach to the retention and recruitment of diverse educators.

Strengths:

The project's proposed activities should accomplish improved educational achievements by the students of the district. (e17-21)

The project seeks the retention of fully certified, experienced and effective educators in high-need schools by providing teacher and leadership training, and incentives. (e17-21)

Weaknesses:

The project does not focus on retention and recruitment of diverse and effective educators and how it would match the demographics of teachers and students (e17-35).

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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

Strengths:

Overview:

The project seeks to increase effectiveness of teachers in 11 schools that are considered high needs, with high levels of poverty and a large minority population who have low academic performance. The applicant proposes to increase the capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse workforce, but provides little detail of the approach to achieve this objective.

Strengths:

The project does focus on meeting the needs of underserved students by expanding the capacity to hire, support, and retain effective and diverse educators. Five strategies are recognized to expand the data systems and promote educator training and leadership opportunities. (e17-40)

Weaknesses:

The project provides little detail of the approach to retain and recruit diverse and effective educators and how it would match the demographics of students (e17-35).

Reader's Score: **2**

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need	20	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	23
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	25
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Resources	30	25
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Diverse Workforce	5	2
Sub Total	10	5
Total	110	92

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - TSL Panel - 4: 84.374A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.
- (iii) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.
- (iv) 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.

Strengths:

- i. The project addresses specific gaps or weaknesses in services and identifies the nature and magnitude of those gaps and weaknesses. These gaps (identified by percentages as well as detailed graphically) include difficulty in attracting and hiring a high-performing and stable workforce; low and under-performing students; as well as the lack of a diverse teacher workforce. Identifying gaps ensures that the project's goals and objectives are clearly defined and focused. (pg. e18)
- ii. The proposed project (i.e., STRONG) builds upon similar or related efforts, such as the Louisiana State Department of Education Teacher Leadership develop plan; state-wide high-quality curricula; adoption of Louisiana Department of Education School Improvement for Best Practices and the newly implemented statewide evaluation tool to improve relevant outcomes as well as a partnership with NIET (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching). This ongoing collaboration is important in that preliminary structures are already in place. As well, collaboration demonstrates that a strong working relationship already exists. (pg. e20, e22)

Weaknesses:

- ii. The project plan overlooks a clear discussion on using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources in support of this project plan. (e21)
- iii. The plan does not specifically explain how it will improve teaching and learning, specifically how rigorous academic standards for students will be achieved. Although the proposed project details the use of teacher evaluative rubrics, filmed classroom lessons and coaching, it does not clearly address how this will be achieved. (pg. e22)
- iv. There is no data in the proposed project to support that the identified gaps/ weaknesses (e.g., opportunities for teacher career advancement; teacher evaluation that is strongly connected to professional development opportunities; collaborative opportunities for teachers) will successfully be addressed. (pg. e23)

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design (25 points)

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:

- (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.
- (ii) The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.
- (iii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

- i. The proposed project demonstrates a strong rationale, which is grounded in the STRONG project, focused on increases in teacher and school leader effectiveness and improved recruitment and retention of effective, diverse educators that will result in increased student academic performance using the TAP system. (pg.e25)
- ii. The design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature from diverse sources. The literature reviews are aligned to address and highlight research in the project which are well-aligned to the rationale. (pg. e27).
- ii. Appropriate methodological tools, such as a teacher-effectiveness training rubric and a principal evaluative rubric, have been previously vetted, which strengthens both their validity and reliability. (pg. e29)
- iii. The project proposes the use of multiple cycles of observation and feedback, provides collaborative and relevant professional development, implements a performance-based compensation system, and creates formal teacher leadership positions to ensure the successful achievement of the project's objectives. (pg e29)
- iii. The methods of evaluation (both qualitative and quantitative) will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. Performance feedback will occur monthly, yearly and throughout the scope of the project, as addressed in the Logic Model. The evaluator will also incorporate and share findings with teachers and imbed them in performance reports to address progress toward key performance measures. (e. 39, Appendix A; e 51)

Weaknesses:

- ii. The project plan does not specifically delineate how the proposed methodological methods will impact and improve student academic performance (e 51).
- iii. The Logic Model does not specifically address how the model will impact/improve student achievement. (e 51)

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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 clear responsibilities for key personnel involved in the project. Key personnel resumes demonstrate that they have the experience and expertise to support the plan within the specified timeframe. (pg. e40; e55-e64).

The project details milestones, key tasks, and the timeframes by which tasks are to be completed within the quarter. The milestones, tasks and timeframes are delineated by year with measurable targets to meet. This clarity and specificity are essential to ensure that the project remains on track to achieve the proposed tasks. (pg. e41)

The management plan provides timelines and milestones within the specified budget, which is outlined in the budget summary. It is important to keep at the forefront the funds associated with each milestone to ensure that the funding to meet milestones in a given timeframe are accomplished within the specified budget. (pg. e 150)

The proposed plan will employ an Advisory Council, whose key responsibilities include recruiting, interviewing, and hiring new teacher leaders. The council will be composed of school and district leaders and will meet quarterly to discuss the project's progress. Implementing an advisory council to provide oversight for the project, ensures equitable access to project' activities, and ensures constant monitoring and assessment of progress toward project milestones. (pg. e174)
The budget is detailed and includes in-kind donations, cash donations from partners, budgets for each of the three years of the project and salary/salary breakdowns. The district's leadership and budget teams are well experienced in managing and executing large-scale projects on time and within budget. This prior experience is essential to understand and foresee any unexpected problems that may arise, and quickly ameliorate them. (pg. e,41; e154)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. Adequacy of Resources (30 points)

The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.**
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.**
- (iii) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.**

Strengths:

- i. There is evidence that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement as there are multiple district-level administrators within the district have experience successfully implementing the TAP System. The Natchitoches Parish School Board and community leaders are committed to this work as evidenced by the letters of support. (pg. e45; Appendix C, pg.66).
- i. The district has committed to funding certain components of this work, including the use of NIET's Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric. The district will adopt the NIET Principal Standards Rubric to support common processes and language across teachers and school leaders. (pg e45)
- ii. The proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population as evidenced by the district's instructional framework. The framework builds upon and encourages teacher-leaders. Also evident in the plan is goal-setting, with goals tied to action items, and strategies highlighting expected results. (pg. e113)
- iii. The applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of partners; and evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., the School Board, District administrators, community leaders) critical to the project's long-term success, as evidenced by numerous letters of support. (pg. e66).

Weaknesses:

There is no evidence to demonstrate that the project includes a multi-year financial support and operating plan which limits the extent to which the proposed project will remain within budget. (pg e45)

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1****1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students.

a. In one or more of the following educational settings:

- (1) Elementary school.
- (2) Middle school.
- (3) High school.
- (4) Career and technical education programs.

b. That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:

- (1) Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-of-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.
- (2) Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

Strengths:

a. The applicant demonstrates that the proposed project is designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved K-12 students, via professional learning opportunities and broad community and district support. This is demonstrated by the planned professional development and teacher-training opportunities designed to increase student achievement. (pg e48)

Weaknesses:

b. The proposed project does not specifically address how a diverse workforce will be recruited and retained. (pg. e19)

The project provides a limited examination of the sources of inequity and inadequacy. (pg. e19)

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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

Strengths:

The proposed plan recognizes a need to focus on the mismatch between teacher/student demographics, as research studies have shown that students of color perform better when they share a similar ethnicity as the educator. (pg. e17-35)

Weaknesses:

The proposed project does not address the methods by which a diverse workforce will be recruited, hired, and retained, to support students in an underserved/high-poverty school district. (pg. e19)

Reader's Score: 2

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need	20	14
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	23
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	25
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Resources	30	25
Sub Total	100	87
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	4
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Diverse Workforce	5	2
Sub Total	10	6
Total	110	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - TSL Panel - 4: 84.374A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Natchitoches Parish School District (S374A230015)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.
- (iii) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.
- (iv) 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.

Strengths:

Overview:

Gaps and weaknesses were addressed by the applicant for the this district serving 13 schools, 11 of which serve economically disadvantaged students. There is also a high percentage of minority students and many low-performing students. (e13-17) The project will build on previous improvement efforts from both the State and the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). (e17-23) It is likely that the project will reach its goals and outcomes through the use of a highly comprehensive plan created by the partners.

Strengths:

- (i) The applicant provided a definite need for the project by comparing district data with state and national trends. The district has a higher than average economically disadvantaged population, high ethnic minority population, a lack of a diverse teaching force, and low performing students. Additionally, teacher turnover, out-of-field teaching percentages, and percentages of novice teachers are high. (e17-19)
- (ii) The project will integrate and build on previous efforts by the State and NIET to support best practices, supportive instructional leadership, teacher collaboration and high standards. A statewide approved teacher evaluation tool will be utilized. (e19-21)
- (iii) When coupled with State efforts, a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning is recognized. The project will build upon existing structures. The applicant currently has a management system (HCMS) and professional development site in place that will be utilized and enhanced throughout the project. (e21-22) Consistency and strengthening of recruitment, hiring, and retention of educators should be the result of the enhanced management system.
- (iv) The design of the project should successfully address the needs of the applicant. A detailed table correlating gaps and weaknesses and the strategies within the project intended to remediate the problems supports that claim. Strategies include strengthened implementation of an evaluation system, creation of formal teacher leadership positions, and implementation of a performance-based compensation system. (e23)

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) The applicant did not provide information on how improvements are related to existing funding streams from other programs or policies at various levels. (e19-21)
- (iii) The applicant did not clearly address how use of the rubric will support rigorous academic standards for students. (e22)
- (iv) The correlation between gaps and strategies is not strong. For instance, discussion of the connects between use of the teaching rubric and high efficiency of teacher or elevated academic achievement of students was limited. (e23)

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**1. Quality of the Project Design (25 points)**

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:

- (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.**
- (ii) The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.**
- (iii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Strengths:

Overview:

The applicant has designed a project that addresses the needs of the targeted populations of educators. (e24-52) A rationale supported by a strong research base was provided. The plan is of high quality and sound methodology. However, the use of the rubric to improve teaching and learning was not convincing. The applicant failed to provide convincing arguments and research that the observation instruments provided will serve the needs of the district or the project. More detail is needed to assess its value. Additionally, student achievement outcomes are not addressed in the Logic Model. (e52)

Strengths:

- (i) A rationale was presented that reflects processes utilized in the project to improve teacher and school leadership effectiveness was correlated to increases in retention, quality teaching, and enhanced learning. The applicant directly linked research findings with many strategies to be implemented in the project. (e24-25)
- (ii) The applicant has provided a thorough, high-quality review of relevant literature for each goal of the project. (e26-37) Most research has been conducted within the past ten years. For instance, the use of the TAP professional development system of evaluation has been reviewed extensively and proven to have a positive impact for participants and programs. (e53) A high-quality plan for implementation has been provided in Table 2 that showcases key activities that support the goals of the project. (e29-31). Implementation of evaluation processes using valid and reliable rubrics and methodological tools help to ensure successful achievement of program objectives. (e31- 37)
- (iii) The applicant has provided a thorough explanation of evaluation methods that will assess progress toward goals and form the basis for timely performance feedback. An outside evaluator, proficient in the use of the methodological tools, will lead formative and summative evaluative measures. Both qualitative and quantitative data that support key research questions will be collected and analyzed. The project plan and evaluation align to a detailed Logic Model. (e37; e40; e52)

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) Explanations for the link between strategies utilized to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement were not well-developed. A strong research base was needed. (e24-25)
- (iii) The Logic Model does not show outcomes that address student achievement resulting from the inputs. (e52)

Reader's Score: 23

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project.

In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers 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:

Overview:

The applicant has provided a management plan that will systematically achieve objectives on time and within budget. A detailed timeline, by quarter, with milestones and personnel responsibilities has been included. (e40-47; e52)

Strengths:

All milestones are aligned to the Logic Model (e52) to highlight a continuous improvement model. The evaluation system also aligns to the Logic Model. An advisory board is in place with regular meetings scheduled. The Project Director is well-qualified and dedicated to the project at 100% FTE to help oversee the workings of the project. Resumes were submitted for the Project Director and three additional key personnel. All appear to have ample education, and experiences to bring the project to fruition. (e54-64)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. Adequacy of Resources (30 points)

The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.
- (ii) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.
- (iii) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad

support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

Strengths:

Overview:

Resources for the proposed project are highly adequate and are likely to result in successful completion of the project. The plan should bring about systemic change that builds local capacity to meet the needs of the targeted population. Stakeholder commitment is high as indicated in the many letters of endorsement and commitments of match. (e45-48) A multi-year management plan was not found.

Strengths:

- (i) The applicant has arranged several key elements to ensure that the project will meet school improvement goals. For instance, there is a history of successful implementation of the evaluation system. The use of validated and reliable instruments strengthens the overall design and works as an assurance that processes are will be appropriately assessed. The support of the school board and other key personnel in the district indicates a strong commitment toward meeting the goals of the project. (e45-46)
- (ii) The project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, and expand services for the targeted populations. Quality practices already in place will be utilized and systematized. Professional learning and coaching will be enhanced. (e46-47)
- (iii) The applicant has demonstrated that resources and policies are in place that will support the project's successful completion. (e47-48) Additionally, letters of support are in place with the match requirements having been exceeded. (e65-80) The budget is reasonable given the scope of this project. (e150-172)

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses noted.
- (ii) No weaknesses noted.
- (iii) A multi-year financial and operating model was not presented to showcase sustainability. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if finances are appropriate and sufficient to complete the tasks and bring the project to a successful end. A convincing explanation of sustainability methods post-funding is needed. (e47-48)

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students.

a. In one or more of the following educational settings:

- (1) Elementary school.**
- (2) Middle school.**
- (3) High school.**
- (4) Career and technical education programs.**

b. That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:

- (1) Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and**

effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-of-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.

(2) Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

Strengths:

Overview:

The demographics of the project area meet Competitive Competency 1 requirements. The district has 11 of its 13 schools designated as high need with high levels of poverty, high minority, and low performance. (e17-21) The applicant provided evidence of inequities in access to a high-quality and stable workforce that matches the demographics of the student population. The applicant did not address inequities in the retention and recruitment of diverse educators to more clearly match the demographics of the student population.

Strengths:

- a. Elementary, Middle, and Secondary high-need schools are included in the project. Goals for the project should bring about higher levels of achievement and a more consistent workforce. (e17-21)
- b. The project will provide teacher and leadership training, opportunities, and incentives to help retain quality teachers and leaders and entice additional fully certified educators to the district. (e17-21)

Weaknesses:

- a. No weaknesses noted.
- b. The applicant did not address retention or recruitment of a diverse population of educators that will more closely resemble the student population of the district.

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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

Strengths:

Overview:

Eleven of the 13 district schools are considered high-need schools. The majority of students in these schools represent minority populations, are economically disadvantaged, and often have low performance and graduation rates. (17-35) The workforce in the district does not match the demographics of the student population.

Strengths:

The project does focus on meeting the needs of underserved students by expanding the capacity to hire, support, and

retain effective and diverse educators. Five strategies are recognized to expand the data systems and promote educator training and leadership opportunities. (e17-40)

Weaknesses:

The project does not focus on the retention or recruitment of educators with a matching demographic to those of the students. (e17-35)

Reader's Score: 2

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