

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

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/16/2017 12:24 PM

Technical Review

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	19
Sustainability		
1. Sustainability	15	15
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priorities		
CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)		
1. CPP 2	1	0
CPP 3: Promoting STEM education		
1. CPP 3	2	2
CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 4	3	3
Total	106	104

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SEED - 6: 84.367D

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

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:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and Student Achievement.

Strengths:

- (1) The applicant presents a detailed narrative to justify the proposed program based on its scale, scope, selectivity, diversity, and effectiveness. This section is supported by an explanation of the program's previous success, number of previous and future participants and rigorous selection process (p. 2-4).
- (2) The proposal describes a redesigned teacher preparation and training program that promises to contribute to the field's understanding of how to prepare new teachers to deliver effective instruction aligned with college and career-ready standards (p.4-6). The applicant's record of partnerships with higher education institutions sustains their expertise in advancing theory, knowledge and practice in teacher preparation (p.6).
- (3) The applicant discusses effectively how the program serves to improve the education field by producing highly effective teachers, developing participants into educational leaders, and addressing the effects of summer learning loss (p. 9, 6-9).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project will be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.
- (5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

- (1) The goals, objectives, and measures are clearly specified and aligned through a detailed narrative and also through the use of summary tables with timelines. Each goal will be measured objectively with easily collectable data (p. 9-25). The proposal describes clearly the training activities and how pilot projects derived the present scale-up project. Table 3 clearly summarizes how the proposed project is different from the previous model.
- (2) The applicant demonstrates a comprehensive effort in the proposal by describing how they will recruit and train college graduates and professionals to teach in high-need schools, providing them with coaching, support and professional development. The proposed project fits into this plan with a redesigned program that demonstrates a difference between regional and national institutes (p. 24-27).
- (3) The applicant refers to the program's evidence of effectiveness and describes the improvement changes designed to improve its quality, intensity and duration (p. 27-28). The proposal refers to previous administrators' satisfaction with the program and how the current proposed scaling next-generation model will improve the quality of the PD training and strengthen the teaching practices.
- (4) The applicant effectively demonstrates how the project will serve to prepare teachers in several shortage areas such as math, science, special education, bilingual, and foreign languages (p. 28).
- (5) The proposal establishes a strategic selection of participants that would be representative of high-need, disadvantaged populations, such as students with disabilities, English learners, etc. (p. 29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:**
 - (1) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.**
 - (2) **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.**
 - (3) **The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.**

Strengths:

- (1) Key project personnel demonstrate appropriate knowledge, expertise and will enhance the project's goals and objectives across three national teams and sub-teams (p. 30-33). This section was strengthened by the description of each team member roles, time commitment, and responsibilities.
- (2) The management plan is presented effectively through the use of a helpful table that summarizes responsibilities, timeline, and milestones aligned to each objective (p. 35-37). The plan is well developed and demonstrates the applicant's applied experience in the implementation of PD projects at this scale. Activities are described and follow a logic model to ensure the project success.
- (3) The proposal successfully describes adequate, sufficient and reasonable resources across partners (p. 35-38). The applicant discusses a commitment to dedicate experienced staff across the different project stages and to ensure effective use of resources.

Weaknesses:

- (2) Although Table 6 is very helpful, it refers to "learning data" and "learning agenda". These terms need more clarification.

Selection Criteria - Sustainability

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.
- (3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant discusses in length the program's long-term financial and programmatic capacity as well as how the project will yield valuable findings for the education community (p.39-40). The proposal is strengthened by the discussion of how the project will provide PD to a number of teachers who, in turn will develop the ability to train and support new teachers.

(2) The project's sustainability was strengthened by how the results would provide information on the elements necessary to retain teachers and promote further collaboration with school districts and higher education institutions (p. 40-43). The discussions focused on how the national institute redesign scale-up and regional hand-off of redesign principles helped to understand how the "lessons learned" would be incorporated to strengthen the model.

(3) The applicant's dissemination plans includes appropriate venues, such as a national conference and websites, to share findings that would positively contribute to the body of research and knowledge of how to provide effective professional development (p.42-43). The proposal discusses the applicant's plan to share this information through an internal and external network of partners.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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:

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
- (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.

Strengths:

(1) The proposed research questions and methods will address all aspects of the PD intervention and are considered appropriate for the planned activities. Statistical research methods will be implemented using a variety of researcher-made instruments. The project will follow a cluster random assignment research design that would effectively examine the impact of the intervention on teacher and student outcomes (p. 46-51).

(2) The proposed evaluation plan employs statistical processes that are frequently used in education research.

Methods to collect quantitative and qualitative data have been clearly summarized in a comprehensive table (p.53-54) that aligns measures, data sources, timeline, and samples.

(3) The proposal discusses a high-quality implementation and evaluation plan that will be reviewed monthly and reported quarterly, and includes regular opportunities to provide feedback (p.54).

(4) The applicant thoroughly discusses how the evaluation process of each goal will satisfy rigorous WWC evidence standards. For instance, the applicant discusses how the program will implement rigorous quantitative measures of teacher effectiveness, processes, qualitative measures of teacher practices, and institute impact (p. 45-50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)

1. Projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources, or other strategies.

Strengths:

Applicant did not apply for this priority.

Weaknesses:

Applicant did not apply for this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 3: Promoting STEM education

1. This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:

(a) Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.

(b) Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on Student Growth.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

***For the purposes of this notice, STEM may include computer science.**

Strengths:

Project goal 2 proposes to increase the number of teachers in traditionally shortage areas (STEM) across 29 school districts, which will impact a considerably large number of students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students

1. This priority funds projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for one or more of the following groups of students:

- (i) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.
- (ii) Students with disabilities.
- (iii) English learners.
- (iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The applicant describes a competitive selection process for recruiting participants that will serve high-need subject areas and populations such as English learners, students with disabilities and members if federally-recognized Indian tribes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	9
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	32
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	18
Sustainability		
1. Sustainability	15	15
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priorities		
CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)		
1. CPP 2	1	0
CPP 3: Promoting STEM education		
1. CPP 3	2	2
CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 4	3	3
Total	106	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SEED - 6: 84.367D

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

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:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and Student Achievement.

Strengths:

The applicant builds on a reputation of success with 27 years of experience providing over 54,000 teacher candidates to districts across the country (p. 1). The longevity of this program has provided substantial data on the characteristics of successful teachers providing a reliable set of characteristics for high quality candidates that will be successful in low-income schools (p.2-3). Teach for America has a highly diverse applicant pool and third party research that provides evidence that their selection model is proven to produce teachers that positively impact student achievement in their first year of teaching (p. 3). At a national level the proposal aligns with current research supporting the implementation of CCR standards and the push to imbed culturally relevant pedagogy into professional learning.

The proposed plan seeks to expand the successful redesign of the institute model in Chicago that was supported by the former two SEED grants to all five national institutes. This project will further develop effective training for new teachers that is aligned CCR standards and will translate to high impact instructional practice in high need schools (p. 5).

Multiple research studies, including two that meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservation, are cited as evidence that Teach for America is poised to achieve the goals outlined in the grant plan (p.7-8).

Weaknesses:

Reference to 2015 national study reported that Teach for America teachers were as effective as veteran teachers with 14 years of experience suggests that tenure results in effectiveness and does not provide evidence that the experienced teachers were in fact effective (p. 7).

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project will be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.

(5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

The project goals, measures and objectives are clearly specified (p. 10-12) including measurable outcomes. The proposed training process is outlined in detail and described the success TFA has experienced in the Chicago and Tulsa national pilots. Data collected noted students had a greater understanding of what they had learned and were spending more time on task (p. 16). Based on lessons learned in Chicago and Tulsa, TFA proposed to several changes to the training model including:

- Training teachers through their content,
- Integrating instruction and culture,
- Use summer teaching to practice the learning prior to the first implementation occurring “in-session”,
- On-going coaching through filming instruction and weekly meetings with their advisors,
- Participation in seminars on diversity, equity and inclusiveness,
- Increasing specialization of trainers,
- Focus on less breadth and more depth of curriculum, and
- Video and lesson sharing tools (p. 17).

The Redesign Hands Off project describes tailoring training needs based on the region and providing access to an instructional coach (p. 21). Expanding professional learning from a summer institute to a two-year transitional model supports research indicating that novice teachers require hands-on support to increase the likelihood of long-term retention in the field. An added benefit will be the training teacher coaches participate in resulting in a secondary benefit to improving their instruction.

Teach for America is focused on providing effective teachers and leaders to work in schools with high poverty so that these students have access to a high quality rigorous education (p. 25). The organization makes a two-year commitment to training new teachers and indicates that individuals will have on-going access to additional resources as alumni of the program (p.26). A critical component of professional learning is an embedded process to provide on-going support following the initial training and the TFA design does this. Additionally research is provided to indicate that more than 80% of TFA graduates continue to work in education (p.26) and that they positively influence educational policy and practice (p. 27). State studies of demonstrate that TFA graduates have a positive impact on student achievement and that the organization is a top teacher provider (p. 28).

TFA projects dispersing the 7500 graduates to work in the following areas of need: 19% math, 15% science ,15% special education, an 5% bilingual or ESL classes (p. 28).

Corp Members (CMs) (TFA's term for new teachers) will be dispersed to meet the needs of high need learners including those in the following groups; high poverty, rural, students with disabilities, English learners and Indian tribes.

Weaknesses:

Project goals are lofty and may not be attainable. For example:

- 80% of 3600 CMs will represent underrepresented populations yet only 51% of applicants represent individuals of color (p. 3-4, 10).
- The redesign of 18 institutes in each summer seems to be a hefty goal considering grant awards will be forthcoming with little time to prepare to complete this task (p.10).

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.

Strengths:

Key project personnel belong to one of three national teams that will collaborate to manage and execute the project. They bring a wide range of expertise in various areas of the Teach For America organization (p.32-33).

The project objectives, responsibilities and milestones are identified along with a specified timeline to complete each of the four components. While ambitious, the administrative layers in the organization have been appropriately assigned to varying aspects of the proposed project that indicates implementation and completion of each milestone activity will be successful (p. 35-37).

Evidence of successful grant management is indicative that the organization will accomplish the projected tasks on time. TFA has received 14 consecutive 4 star ratings (p.37) for grant management. A staffing structure has been designed to maximize the time of full-time and seasonal staff to produce outcomes using reasonable resources that result in overall program effectiveness (p. 38).

Weaknesses:

Resumes for key TFA project leaders reveal limited work experience in schools, particularly public school systems, and that may hinder the ability of TFA to design a process that is easily replicated in public school systems.

Selection Criteria - Sustainability

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.
- (3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

The SEED grant will cover slightly more than ¼ of the total project cost, providing meaningful support yet TFA retains responsibility for the majority of the funding (p.39). The outcomes will drive improvements to TFA program capacity that will improve the training for future teachers and leaders.

The findings will benefit work done with existing partnerships as well as strengthen TFA's ability to foster new connections

(p. 41). It is anticipated that the findings from this study will guide the work of IHEs in redesigning existing teacher preparation programs to prepare novice educators for the reality of educational system in 2017. Data collected from the Hands-Off project will provide data to support the design of new teacher mentoring programs and encourage partnerships between IHE's and school districts to design the support novice teachers require to increase retention rates (p.42).

Information will be disseminated to TFA regional sites, LEA and university partners as well as through TFA journals (p. 45).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 15

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:

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**
- (2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**
- (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.**

Strengths:

The overall plan is thorough, feasible and includes appropriate evaluation methods (p. 46-51). An outside evaluator will be retained to collect data and review findings (p. 45). A cluster random evaluation design will compare the impact between five regions implementing the hands off design and another five that do not use the new model ensuring that baseline information for teachers and students is similar (p. 46-47). The applicant provides a thorough description of the multi-year research design including data points and on-site visits conducted by the evaluator (p. 49-51).

Qualitative data will be gathered to measure the impact of the scale-up summer training program. The Hands-Off program will be evaluated using quantitative data that includes outcomes for teachers and their students.

Formative feedback will be provided by MDRC for TFA leaders at regular intervals to assist in project planning (p. 54).

Periodic performance feedback will be provided to TFA from MDRC and the final outcomes will be made available to the public through a policy brief in June 2020.

The evaluation of the Hands Off project will meet the What Works Clearninghouse standards without reservations (p. 54).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)

- 1. Projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources, or other strategies.**

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 3: Promoting STEM education

- 1. This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:**

- (a) **Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.**
- (b) **Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.**

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on Student Growth.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

*For the purposes of this notice, STEM may include computer science.

Strengths:

TFA projects that 30% of CMs will teach STEM subjects and 80% of these individuals will be from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM (p. 4). The effectiveness of STEM CMs will be calculated as goals have been set as to the number of STEM CMs that will participate in the project (p. 56-57).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students

- 1. This priority funds projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for one or more of the following groups of students:**

- (i) **Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.**
- (ii) **Students with disabilities.**
- (iii) **English learners.**

(iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The creation of a regional summer institute designed to meet the unique needs of rural communities will benefit staff working in these areas and it is anticipated that academic achievement will increase for the students served in these schools. This project will benefit rural areas through the design of service projects, residency program professional development and providing summer school for communities that do not have the funding to offer extended year services (p. 24-25).

The applicant provided a percent of students in each of the noted areas that will be served through this grant (p.29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/16/2017 03:09 PM

Technical Review

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	19
Sustainability		
1. Sustainability	15	15
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priorities		
CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)		
1. CPP 2	1	0
CPP 3: Promoting STEM education		
1. CPP 3	2	2
CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students		
1. CPP 4	3	3
Total	106	104

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - SEED - 6: 84.367D

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Teach For America (U367D170011)

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:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and Student Achievement.

Strengths:

Significance of the proposal on a national level was demonstrated by successfully identifying TFA as the nation's largest producer of teachers for high-need schools, and specifically describing the scope of the project to enable the applicant to directly support the future 7,500 new Corps Members (CMs) that TFA proposes to recruit in 2017 and 2018. It was also noted that those CMs will go on to teach all P-12 grade levels and subject areas in high-need schools in 53 communities, in 36 states, and Washington, DC, including 15 rural regions (p. 24).

By proposing to create a comprehensive continuum for CM development by training regional support staff to reinforce the principles embedded in the redesign, the proposal has the potential to assist in the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices (p. 27). It was also noted that lessons learned from this work will not only inform future TFA trainings and ongoing support structures, but will also be integrated into future theory, frameworks, and resources

Developed, shared externally, and across the TFA network.

The applicant adequately noted some of their challenges, and included producing highly effective teachers for high-need classrooms as their strategy for developing their CMs into educational leaders oriented towards achieving dramatic student learning gains, and addressing the effects of summer learning loss for thousands of students in high-need schools across the country (p. 29).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project

be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.

(5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

The goals, objectives, and outcomes identified by the applicant appear to be clearly specified, aligned, and measurable. For example, the applicant noted a specific measurable goal to implement summer institutes to prepare and retain first-year CMs to teach in low-income communities, and to measure it by reaching a goal of 95% retention rate, 30% STEM CMs, and 80% of STEM CMs underrepresented, etc. (p. 32). Institute CM coursework and goals are aligned to help CMs establish a vision for their summer school classes and learn essential teaching frameworks, curricula, and skills (p. 35).

By increasing the rigor and relevance of CM training by supporting a scale-up of their training redesign at all of their national institutes, and developing and piloting a “handoff” of the redesign principles to regions to integrate into their ongoing CM support and development, the applicant clearly provided a comprehensive proposal to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students (p. 32).

The applicant successfully identified that scaling a next-generation institute model, developing and piloting a “hand off” of principles embedded in the new institute model to regions, opening new and refining existing regional institutes, and implementing a new Rural Cooperative Institute (RCI). This comprehensive effort will improve upon quality, intensity, and duration by fostering a stronger continuum of CM development (p. 50). These improvements will allow CMs to internalize their training better and to strengthen their practice to support academic standards for students.

The applicant effectively included data identifying that out of the 7,500 teachers to be prepared through this proposal, the majority will be prepared to teach in shortage areas with a projection of 19% to be prepared to teach math, 15% science, 14% special education, 5% bilingual or ESL classes, and 3% foreign languages (p. 50).

The applicant effectively noted that CMs teach in schools where 84% of students receive free or reduced-price lunch, 6% teach in rural LEAs in 12 states, and over 14% teach in the 15 TFA regions considered predominantly rural (p. 51).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:

(1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.

(2) 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.

(3) The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.

Strengths:

The applicant successfully identified project responsibilities, time commitments, and relevant experience of key project personnel. For example, the project director has six years of experience with TFA's training and development efforts, is the founding head of Massachusetts Regional Institute, and manages all national institutes and support for regional institutes. 100% of his allotted time/effort would go towards this project (p. 54).

An example of the adequacy of the management plan in providing milestones was demonstrated by providing weekly retention reports, and by monitoring to ensure desired retention rates throughout institute and through the first day of school (p. 56). Based on the provided information, it is highly probable that the objective for the timeline concerning May-July would be successfully implemented. It would be the owner's responsibility to implement redesign with 2,025 CMs at national institutes (p. 56).

Based on the provided information, the program includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed SEED project as they innovate institutes to improve CM impact, redesign scale-up at national institutes, hand-off to regions, and provide regional training institutes. (p. 60). Sufficient and reasonable resources are included within the proposed plan as it relies on existing staff structures and strategic engagement of contractors and partners (p. 60).

Weaknesses:

There was a lack of clarity on the Table 6 Management Plan Chart. The statement "Gather data for learning (see above)" appears in many locations, but does not direct the reader to specific locations to obtain data.

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Sustainability

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.
- (3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

The SEED project is designed to build capacity that will yield important information. TFA will endure beyond the grant project period by investing a \$17 million SEED grant that will cover a meaningful portion of project costs of developing and implementing 18 institutes in 2017 and 2018. (p. 61).

Based on the provided information there is high probability that the proposed redesign scale-up will help to sharpen methods for training staff to implement the principles of the redesign with fidelity. Also, the rigorous external evaluation of the hand-off pilot will inform understanding of what a complete CM development continuum looks like at a national scale, and how to approach CM development more broadly. It was also stated that the SEED project builds program capacity by testing and refining new approaches, and by making the learnings, tools, and resources widely available to the TFA community (p. 62).

The applicant effectively noted knowledge sharing mechanisms that will be incorporated in the dissemination of information about results and outcomes of the proposed project, enabling the public, and others to use the information or strategies. For example, some mechanisms include internal team websites, communications channels, and organization-wide social media platforms (p. 66).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 15

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:

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
- (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.

Strengths:

A rigorous random assignment research design will be used to examine the impact of the hand-off, and a mixed-methods implementation study will be used to explore the features of the scale-up and of the hand-off. The applicant demonstrated the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposal. Also, a cluster random assignment research design will be used to examine the impact of the handoff on the outcomes of CMs and their students (p. 68).

The applicant thoroughly demonstrated how the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data. For example, it was noted that quantitative data will be collected from four main sources to evaluate the impact of the hand-off on the outcomes of teachers and their students (p. 74).

In order to meet the criteria of providing performance feedback and permitting periodic assessment of progress, the applicant specifically noted that MDRC will provide formative feedback and conduct virtual conferences with TFA leaders to assist in its assessment and planning during the project, and they will also prepare a practitioner brief with findings from its observations and interviews during the summer institutes in 2018 and findings from phone interviews with the summer 2018 CMs after their first year of teaching (p. 76).

To demonstrate the methods of evaluation are well implemented, the applicant specifically identified the evaluation of the hand-off will be based on a random assignment research design and it is expected that there will be "low" attrition as defined by the WWC (p. 76).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost Effectiveness)**

- 1. Projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources, or other strategies.**

Strengths:

Applicant did not apply for this priority.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 3: Promoting STEM education

- 1. This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:**

- (a) Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.
- (b) Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on Student Growth.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

*For the purposes of this notice, STEM may include computer science.

Strengths:

The applicant specifically identifies how a SEED grant will help prepare 3,600 new CMs to begin teaching in Fall 2017 and 3,900 new CMs in Fall 2018, with at least 30% of each cohort teaching STEM subjects, and will aim to maintain a corps in which 30% of our CMs teach STEM subjects and 80% of whom are from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM (p. 24 & 26).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priorities - CPP 4: Supporting High-Need Students

- 1. This priority funds projects that are designed to improve academic outcomes for one or more of the following groups of students:**

- (i) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.
(ii) Students with disabilities.
(iii) English learners.
(iv) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

TFA presented a design that is geared towards improved academic outcomes for high need students: with over 6% of CMs teaching in rural LEAs in 12 states, over 14% teaching in TFA regions, 14% CMs teach in special education classrooms, 5% teach in ESL or Bilingual classroom, and 1% of students identify as Native (p. 51).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

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