

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/22/2020 09:45 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Highest Coronavirus Burden		
1. Coronavirus Burden	20	20
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan		
1. Project Services/Plan	35	30
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	18
Sub Total	80	68
Total	80	68

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - FY20 REM - 4: 84.425B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

(2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

Strengths:

Page 20 – The proposal indicated that student access was a burden. The applicant asserts that there were subgroups defined as 39.4% of students that needed access to a device with Internet and 7/25 local education agencies with 80-100% of students without reliable Internet. The subgroups of students that could not access rigorous online teaching and learning were a result of Covid-19. The lack of access for these subgroups indicates a significant number of students impacted by Covid-19.

Page 20 – The proposal indicated that professional development for educators was a Covid-19 burden. The proposal indicated that educators did not have adequate professional development to provide instruction. Finally, the proposal addressed the impact of Covid-19 on parents to provide educational support to their children and the ability of the SEA to provide timely communication to parents.

Page 20 – The proposal acknowledges that the state, in comparison to other states, had a lower number of Covid-19 cases. Although the impact of the virus is lower, the proposal identified that the effect on education was not lower because of the challenge to deliver rigorous online instruction. The proposal attributes the lack of rigor to professional development for instructors. Additionally, the impact of a lack of timely communication with parents is addressed as a burden brought on by Covid-19.

Access to rigorous instruction for students, professional development for instructors, and timely communication to parents are strengths of this proposal.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

In addition, the Secretary considers--

(1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project to respond to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

(3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

Sub-Criterion 0: Page 21 - The proposal addressed increasing access to members of traditionally underrepresented groups. (5 points)

Sub-Criterion 1: Page 25 – The proposal includes a project plan that outlines how the absolute priority will be addressed by increasing instructional delivery options to students. The project plan is exceptional in that it will provide opportunities for students to participate in courses that they would not otherwise have an opportunity to take. Page 27 – The proposal aligns with the need to increase courses based on workforce needs. The project will address socio-emotional learning. (10 points)

Sub-Criterion 2: Page 28 – The proposal identified the lack of access to all students by asserting that only 10 of the state's 25 LEAs offer courses in Chinese, and only one offers a course in Korean. The proposal would increase access to Chinese and Korean to all students within the state. Page 22 – The proposal indicated that the state decreased the number of students that do not have access to the Internet by expanding broadband coverage to families and supporting the purchase of devices. (7 points)

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 25 – The program proposes to provide online courses taught by state-certified teachers. The courses align with the state's standards, curriculum, workforce needs, and integrate computer science. Course development would include foreign language, mathematics, cybersecurity, social studies, and science. Additionally, the program proposes to provide timely communication to parents. (4 points)

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 30 – Access to math courses was related to the Covid-19 pandemic and student performance. Assertions are supported by research. The proposal addressed the gaps in services and opportunities that exist in mathematics. Additionally, the proposal cites current research and aligns the research with the proposed plan for mathematics. (4 points)

Weaknesses:

Sub-Criterion 2: Page 33 – The proposal discusses the workforce demand for cybersecurity and discusses the lack of access to cybersecurity courses. However, the proposal does not discuss how or if cybersecurity courses will increase with this program.

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 28 – The proposal indicates that online offerings for Chinese and Korean will be available to all students. However, the proposal does not address how students without access to devices will benefit from the courses.

Sub-Criterion 3: Pages 28-29 – The proposal asserts that a lack of awareness of the importance of critical languages for the workforce contributes to why the foreign language courses are not available in schools. The proposal will address increasing access to these foreign language courses. However, the plan does not address how the lack of awareness will be addressed. It is not clear that increasing foreign language offerings will expand access because the state asserts that

a lack of awareness of the importance of foreign language is a factor that contributes to the low availability of language courses. The proposal does not address how the lack of awareness will be addressed.

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 27 – The proposal aligns with the need for foreign language courses to workforce needs. However, the statistics assert a drop in the number of programs, and the cited research does not support an increase in workforce demand. Statistical references are not cited to support the claims made by the proposal. Because of the lack of citations, it is unclear the assertions made in the proposal are supported by research.

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 33 – It is not clear how adding elementary social studies and science courses will increase student's access to remote learning options or improve student outcomes. Additionally, the social studies course plan does not reflect a connection to research.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources

1. C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

- (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)**
- (2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)**
- (3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)**
- (4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)**

Strengths:

Sub-Criterion 1: Page 36 – The management plan identifies stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including students, parents, educators, content specialists, field experts, industry representatives as well and university representatives that will serve as a part of the management team. The responsibilities of each team member are clearly defined. (3 points)

Sub-Criterion 2: Page 37 – The proposal estimated the costs of the plan to the costs of similar projects completed in the past in which the state developed professional development courses and modules. The cost at the time ranged from \$275,000 to \$400,000. The comparison to the previous cost provides evidence that the proposed funds will adequately support the proposed project. (5 points)

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 83 – The proposal outlines the costs over three years. The costs aligns with the objectives and design of the proposal. (5 points)

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 38 – Annual enrollment is anticipated to grow by 10% over the next ten years. (5 points)

Weaknesses:

Sub-Criterion 1: Page 39 – Although the responsibilities of each stakeholder are provided, the timeline does not include each responsible stakeholder. It is not clear who is responsible for completing a task at a specified time. Because the proposal does not have a clear timeline, it is difficult to determine if the project plan will be completed on time and within

budget.

Sub-Criterion 2: No weaknesses noted.

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 38 – It is not clear if the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives and design of the plan because the information provided does not include quantifiable anticipated results. The proposal simply states that more students will enroll in data science. The proposal does not provide a quantity. It is not possible to determine the anticipated impact the applicant believes the grant will have on student outcomes. The same is true for mathematics courses; the impact of integrating computer science is not known because quantifiable results are not provided.

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 38 – The proposal states that students will wish to continue their progression of world language; however, the number of students that will be impacted is not known. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of people to be served. The applicant does not provide quantifiable results on the number of persons to be served by the project. It is difficult to determine the anticipated results and benefits of the project.

Reader's Score: 18

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Highest Coronavirus Burden		
1. Coronavirus Burden	20	14
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan		
1. Project Services/Plan	35	32
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	18
Sub Total	80	64
Total	80	64

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - FY20 REM - 4: 84.425B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

(2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

Strengths:

The proposal lists some challenges associated with COVID-19, including Internet and device access, professional learning, parent/family communication, and learning management systems. (p. e20). The proposal identifies that nearly half (39.4%) of public school students do not have access to digital devices required for learning.

Weaknesses:

This applicant's proposal offers generalities without specific statistics and sources that place Maryland relative to other states in terms of COVID-19 burden (p. e20). For example, it is stated that a majority of Maryland educators had not received professional development, but no specific percentage or source is stated (p. e20). The narrative does not offer additional information to elaborate upon the information provided by the initial notice inviting applications.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

In addition, the Secretary considers--

(1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project to respond to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

(3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date

knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The GEPA statement asserts the state departments non-discrimination efforts and accessibility for students and educators with disabilities (p. e10). (4 points)

(1) The project narrative articulates an exceptional approach that includes and unites several key aspects of quality learning, including blended instruction, a focus on disciplinary content, and focused professional learning about digital environments to ensure quality of services (p. e23-e24). These project elements are grounded in the literature and existing practice across Maryland (p. e24). The inclusion of state-certified educators in the facilitation of these courses is also a major strength. (10 points)

(2) Overall, the proposed work makes a case for how the portfolio of content will specifically address existing gaps in offerings across the state (p. e27-e34). For example, the narrative makes subject-specific claims about how gaps in particular subjects such as Chinese will be addressed (p. e27-28). These arguments cover other subjects including mathematics, cybersecurity, elementary social studies, and elementary science. (10 points)

(3) The applicant demonstrates that the slate of courses is likely to address many of the needs both within the COVID-19 situation as well as more broadly. (3 points)

(4) The narrative is well-grounded in empirical and theoretical literature with numerous citations for each of the five main subjects it proposes to develop courses around. The development model which includes multiple, interconnected phases, and is also grounded in best practices around instructional design. (5 points)

Weaknesses:

The GEPA statement and project narrative do not explicitly state how under-represented educators will be recruited, nor how specifically other subgroups of students such as English Learners will be supported in this project.

(1) No weaknesses detected/ noted.

(2) No weaknesses detected/ noted.

(3) The proposal does not clearly describe how educators will be supported in developing the professional skills they will need to facilitate this kind of learning.

(4) No weaknesses detected/ noted.

Reader's Score: 32

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources

1. C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)

(2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)

Strengths:

- (1) The applicant gives some detail in the timeline about project deliverables and processes (p. e39). Responsibilities of the key staff are clearly articulated. (p. e37). (4 points)
- (2) The applicant outlines that the bulk of the budget is devoted to the infrastructure costs with delivering online instruction and content and is are budgeted at market rates. Given the need identified by the proposal about the efficiencies of having a common system, this investment of the funds is a major strength. The proposal narrative uses past per-course costs to justify the budget level for developing five types of courses, while factoring increased costs to meet accessibility requirements (p. e37). (4 points)
- (3) The applicant offers cost information that is suitable for the project objectives. (5 points)
- (4) The proposal narrative provides some information about the per-student costs scaling down as more students participate (p. e38). (5 points)

Weaknesses:

- (1) The project plan does not specify overarching goals or specific and measurable objectives associated with project years or activities. Without this specificity, it will be difficult to assess the progress of the project work and adjust to ensure performance. The proposal does not supply enough information about the management plan to ensure that the budget will be sufficient.
- (2) All the state department's time is to be provided in-kind but it is not specified what the level of in-kind effort would be and is therefore difficult to assess whether that level of effort would be sufficient to support project success.
- (3) No weaknesses detectednoted.
- (4) Without specific targets for the number of students enrolled in each course named as part of the project objectives, it is impossible to estimate per-student costs for this project.

Reader's Score: 18

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Highest Coronavirus Burden		
1. Coronavirus Burden	20	15
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan		
1. Project Services/Plan	35	32
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	19
Sub Total	80	66
Total	80	66

Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - FY20 REM - 4: 84.425B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Maryland State Department of Education (S425B200011)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Highest Coronavirus Burden

1. A: Highest Coronavirus Burden (up to 20 Points)

(2) The extent to which the applicant has a high coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors identified by the applicant in response to Application Requirement 3. (up to 20 points)

Strengths:

Despite the comparatively low infection rates in Maryland (p. 4), the applicant make a strong case that school closures nevertheless resulted in serious challenges for the state's students, families, and educators. Specifically, the applicant notes that teachers did not have the necessary training in delivering effective online instruction and that parents experienced serious challenges when trying to work at home and support students' online education.

Additionally, the applicant indicate that because just two out of 25 of Maryland's LEAs have adopted one-to-one device initiatives, there were not enough devices to guarantee each student a device to support online learning (p. 4). The applicant explains that funding priorities in LEAs with large numbers of socioeconomically challenged students made it impossible to implement 1:1 device initiatives (p. 5), which means the challenges of such underserved students were exacerbated by coronavirus-related school closures.

Weaknesses:

A weakness in this proposal is that there is little discussion of how the coronavirus has impacted Maryland's economy in ways that will impact the state's ability to provide high-quality education to all students. While logic suggests the tax revenues will no doubt be reduced, the degree to which that is the case and how it would affect education funding is unclear. Although the applicant speaks to the needs of underserved students (e.g., rural), there is insufficient detail or data to understand the extent to which such students have been affected disproportionately.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Services and Project Plan

1. B: Quality of Project Services and Project Plan (up to 35 points)

The Secretary considers the quality of project services and project plan.

In determining the quality of the project services and project plan, the Secretary considers the quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (up to 5 points)

In addition, the Secretary considers--

(1) The extent to which the proposed project is an exceptional approach to absolute priority being addressed and includes a detailed project plan for addressing the absolute priority. (up to 10 points)

(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project to respond to the needs of students. (up to 10 points)

(3) The likelihood that the services to be provided by the proposed project will expand access to remote learning options and lead to improvements in student outcomes. (up to 5 points)

(4) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The project's primary strength is that it proposes a robust expansion of online coursework tailored to the state's needs and expectations for high-quality virtual learning opportunities for all students.

Additionally, the state will make its Learning Management System (LMS) available to public and non-public schools, which is a strength of this proposal (p. 2).

The project is further strengthened by innovative approaches to modular instructional design (p. 11) such that students in rural areas can access the same content available to teachers across the state, even if the students' schools do not offer a given course. While participation in a course like Advanced Placement Statistics has been concentrated in just two of the state's LEAs, the modular approach to distance-learning instructional design will open such opportunities for even the most rural students. Also, because the state has already begun to tackle the partner problems of device and broadband access, there is an increased likelihood that rural students will in fact take advantage of these opportunities.

Additionally, the project emphasizes workforce preparation (p. 12) and future readiness through its emphasis on STEM-related learning, including such courses as cybersecurity and data science, even teaching computer science at the elementary level.

The project's emphasis on supporting the social and emotional learning (p. 2) and social connection through blended learning (i.e., synchronous and asynchronous approaches) means students will maintain crucial connections with other people even while distance learning in the era of social distancing.

As a result of the state's efforts to provide device and internet to all students, this project will focus funding on strengthening the curricular domain of the state's distance-learning infrastructure.

By expanding the state's current LMS to the seven LEAs not using it, the state will be able strengthen curricula channels to support student learning by offering previously unavailable courses through the LMS.

Given the project's emphasis on modularity and research-based approaches to distance learning and instructional design (p. 11), there is a strong likelihood that the proposed project can meaningfully impact student learning. Because the expert-developed courses will be designed as asynchronous modules, individual students would be able to enroll in newly available courses, and at the same time, teachers throughout the state could leverage those asynchronous modules, even in traditional face-to-face classrooms. A student in a rural area who wants to take Advanced Placement Statistics, for example, would be able to access the very same instructional content available to their peers in larger, better resourced schools.

The project is bolstered by current educational research, and it attends specifically to equality of access for all students via Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principals (p. 3). The project's emphasis on accessibility for all students is admirable given that the education of students with physical and/or learning disabilities needs particular attention when designing distance learning opportunities. Maryland's use of UDL principles suggests that the needs of such students are at the forefront of their project and attend to the values at the core of this grant opportunity.

Generally speaking, the proposal provides an impressively robust citational infrastructure to demonstrate how it has been informed by empirical educational research.

Weaknesses:

Although the proposal speaks to equity of access, it provides insufficient detail both in describing the specific barriers encountered by underrepresented groups and in addressing how such barriers can be addressed through the project.

While the applicant describe how access will increase for most of the planned courses, there is a lack of clarity in relation to the cybersecurity course in particular.

The proposal does not adequately describe how teachers will receive professional development in delivering effective blended and distance learning. Given the lack of experience and training in distance learning among teachers, high-quality professional development is crucial when expanding course offerings and statewide Learning Management System access.

Reader's Score: 32

Selection Criteria - Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources**1. C: Quality of the Management Plan and Adequacy of Resources (up to 25 points)**

In determining the quality of the management plan and adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers--

- (1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (up to 5 points)**
- (2) The extent to which the proposed use of funds will adequately support the proposed project. (up to 5 points)**
- (3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (up to 5 points)**
- (4) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits. (up to 10 points)**

Strengths:

The project's logic model (p. 10), management team and plan (p. 21), and proposed project timeline (p. 23) work together to provide general overview of the project process. While the logic model draws attention to the resources, activities, and outcomes of the project with particular attention students on teachers (e.g., course development), the management plan delineates the roles of each project member (e.g., K-12 experts) and the timeline (e.g., course development strands) illustrates the project's progression over each year of the grant. The various components of the project, then, are linked together coherently across the three elements.

Furthermore, the project is committed to data-driven, research-based processes for project evaluation which will measure outcomes both in the short- and long-term (e.g., postsecondary outcomes) (p. 23).

Based on details included in the budget narrative, the proposed funds should prove sufficient to achieve the project's aims. As shown in the budget narrative (pp. e85-86), which provides additional detail about how and where funds will be allocated, relevant expenses have been accounted for and totaled to demonstrate how the funds support the project.

In addition to providing a detailed breakdown of funding allocations for each year of the grant period, the applicant has provided notes that justify the various expenses, explaining how the funds will be directed in particular ways to support the

project's goals.

The proposed project will provide students, including those from underserved populations, with robust and wide-ranging distance learning curricula (e.g., foreign languages, mathematics, cybersecurity, and elementary science and social studies) (p. 11). Given the scope of the project and the state's commitment to increasing device and internet access, this project's cost is reasonable in relation to proposed outcomes.

Focusing specifically on the anticipated results and benefits related to state-specific, high-quality, future-focused course offerings via the state's expanded LMS, the costs are likely to prove reasonable given those courses will remain available beyond the period of the grant.

The applicant notes on p. 22 that they project 10% annual enrollment growth over the next decade and that per-student spending will therefore decrease over time.

Weaknesses:

For the 2020-2021 school year, which is the year most likely to be disrupted by school closures and/or hybrid learning models, the project's activities are limited to LMS expansion and professional development for teachers (see the proposed timeline on p. 23). While both the expansion and professional learning are likely to benefit students, a large portion of the grant funding will be directed towards the development of high-quality online courses, but the courses will not be fully implemented until Year 3 of the grant.

Although the management offers a general picture of key project players, the descriptions of their responsibilities are quite general. It is therefore difficult to speak to how thoughtfully these positions have been developed and how effectively they will be deployed.

Additionally, the timeline provided (p. 23) is far too general and needs more specificity and alternative formatting. A timeline should demonstrate more specifically how the project parts will come together and be evaluated year over year.

The project package does not provide any sort of numerical breakdown of how many persons will be served by the project; indeed, there is no reference to the number of total students in Maryland. It is therefore difficult to evaluate with much precision how reasonable the costs are in relation to the number of persons likely to benefit.

Reader's Score: 19

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