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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Highest Coronavirus Burden			
1. Coronavirus Burden		20	18
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan			
1. Project Services/Plan		35	29
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources			
1. Management Plan/Resources		25	18
	Sub Total	80	65
	Total	80	65

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)

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 32 – The applicant asserts that the state was impacted by unemployment. The Covid-19 impact identified by the proposal is explained by research and statistics to support the assertion that the effects, as defined, significantly impacted students, parents, and schools within the state. The research provided by the applicant is significant because the applicant asserts that before the impact of Covid-19, the state led the nation with low unemployment rates. Prior to Covid-19, the unemployment rate for the state was 2.5%. As a result of Covid-19, the unemployment rate is now at 14.5%. The state is now 41st in the nation. Therefore, the impact of Covid-19 significantly impacted unemployment rates in the state.

   Weaknesses:

   The proposal addressed the aging population as an impact on the state. However, it is unclear how the aging population affects the state's ability to provide remote instruction. Therefore, age may not impact the burden of Covid-19.

Reader's Score: 18

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 18 – The proposal will increase access to remote learning by allowing students to access courses at any school regardless of location. (4 points)

Sub-Criterion 1: Page 15 – The proposal will implement a statewide learning management system (LMS), teacher training, and incentive pay for instructors to participate, write curriculum, and participate in open access for students across the state. Therefore, the proposed statewide LMS system is an exceptional approach because it will increase the quality of instruction and course choices for students. (10 points)

Sub-Criterion 2: Page 19 – Currently, the state has a single virtual academy capable of providing online instruction to students in grades 4-12. The proposal asserts that the single academy cannot accommodate all students. Therefore, all schools need a plan for remote learning. The proposal is exceptional because the single virtual academy is identified as a weakness and the proposed action will help to strengthen this weakness by increasing the number of course choices as well as increase access to an LMS. (10 points)

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 20 – Some individual school districts have purchased an LMS for their students. The proposal will give all students across the state equal access to the same LMS system eliminating the need for individual schools to purchase an LMS and provide equal access for all students across the state. Therefore, increased access to an LMS will expand access to remote learning opportunities for students. (3 points)

Sub-Criterion 3: Page 21 – The proposed statewide LMS will support initiatives to have statewide self-paced competency-based instruction. Page 22 – The proposal asserts that a shared LMS will improve communication between teachers across the state and help to serve underserved, educationally disadvantaged students.
Sub-Criterion 4: Page 31 – The challenges identified in the proposal are data-driven. The data-driven approach is indicated by a baseline statewide survey to develop an understanding of the needs of the state. (2 points)

Weaknesses:

Sub-Criterion 0: Page 21 – The proposal identified challenges to serve underserved and educationally disadvantaged students. However, a strategy to ensure access to diverse populations related to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability are not mentioned in the proposal. The proposal does not include strategies for addressing equal access and treatment for underrepresented groups.

Sub-Criterion 3: Although the plan is to provide access to an LMS to all schools in the district, it is unclear how increased access to remote learning will be achieved. The proposal states how the LMS will be distributed and adopted; however, the direct impact on students using the LMS is not clear. Quantifiable statistics of student use of the LMS or access to remote learning is not addressed.

Sub-Criterion 4: The proposal does not align services to research principles or effective practices to deliver online instruction or professional development for educators. Current research is not cited in the proposal.

Reader's Score: 29

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 25 – The management plan identifies key personnel that will be a part of the management team. The responsibilities, a timeline for completion, and milestones for accomplishing each task are clearly defined for each team member. (3 points)

Sub-Criterion 2: Pages 25-29 – The management plan identifies the use of grant funds for each goal, objective, and activity. Quantifiable goals are provided to determine if the objectives adequately support the proposed project. (5 points)

Sub-Criterion 3: Pages 25-29 – The proposal provides an outline of objectives, goals, and activities that identify the potential significance of the proposal indicating the percent of the impact that will be achieved by the grant proposal. The proposal provides quantifiable goals. (5 points)

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 32 – The proposal will impact students within the state. The proposal clearly identifies the anticipated results and benefits, which indicates the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons that will be served. (5 points)

Weaknesses:

Sub-Criterion 1: Within the timeline where "ongoing" is noted, it is difficult to determine which objectives will be accomplished over the three years of the grant period.

Sub-Criterion 4: Page 27 – By the end of three years, the goal of the grant is to reach 25% of students. Therefore, in relation to the number of persons served, the proposal will not impact a significant number of students.

Reader's Score: 18

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Highest Coronavirus Burden			
1. Coronavirus Burden		20	18
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan			
1. Project Services/Plan		35	27
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources			
1. Management Plan/Resources		25	16
	Sub Total	80	61
	Total	80	61

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)

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 narrative provides detailed information about several categories related to COVID-19 burden, including unemployment rates, vulnerable populations, racial disparities, and elderly individuals. The applicant explains that economic impacts of COVID-19 can affect tax revenues and therefore school funding. Most of these comparisons are made in absolute terms compared with other states (e.g., a median age of 43, the second highest in the nation is cited on p. e37). Other comparisons on unemployment justify how New Hampshire has been disproportionately affected, with absolute rankings provided (p. e32).

   Weaknesses:

   The proposal does not make a clear argument about why these broader social and economic impacts, in particular the elderly or aging population, will create a greater burden for its educational system and students.

Reader's Score: 18

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 provides explicit statements of non-discrimination regarding six different protected groups. (4 points)

(1)   The project narrative describes a statewide learning management system (LMS) that will enable consistency and support,; common schema,; and equity and access. The applicant provides information that the approach ties into the state's existing initiatives to move toward competency-based assessment and to maximize access in rural local educational agencies. Project activities will further integrate comprehensive training for educators, stipends for materials development, parent- and student-facing guidelines, feedback, and courses that can be shared across the state (pp. e20-e25) (10 points)

(2)   The applicant indicates that the proposed work would create a central repository for courses that could be used across the state of New Hampshire. (8 points)

(3)   The proposed central LMS for the state would solve some of the challenges of individual districts of students developing across different platforms and would facilitate access. (5 points)

(4)   No strengths noted. (0 points)

Weaknesses:

The GEPA statement does not provide any information about the specific barriers, and how they may be overcome, for various groups that have been historically under-represented (p. e10).

(1)   No weaknesses noted.

(2)   There is not enough detail about course development processes to assess how new courses will be developed to meet specific needs. Overall, there is also not a clear picture of how the overall portfolio of courses will be assessed for quality, standards alignment, and user satisfaction. There is no clear mechanism for adjusting the statewide portfolio of offerings.

(3)   No weaknesses noted.

(4)   The proposal narrative does not cite any theoretical or empirical literature for the design of the system and its features. It is not clear how principles of online learning for either students or teachers, or blended models that integrate in-person with distance instruction, are built into the program design.

Reader's Score: 27

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 presents that it would hire a dedicated project director to oversee activities. Overarching project goals and objectives are aligned to the work proposed, including specific measures and targets for teacher participation in training and student participation in the platform. (pp. e25-e27) (3 points)

(2)   The applicant specifies that funds would be used for both dedicated project staff as well asand stipends for educators. These amounts are appropriately compared to the bulk of costs which that would go to the outside LMS vendor. (5 points)

(3)   The applicant demonstrates that adequate funds are dedicated to stipends to incentivize quality course development. (3 points)

(4)   The goal is to reach 75% of teachers across the state by the end of three years, which is a potentially large impact in terms of educators served. (5 points)

Weaknesses:

(1)   The project plan is not well-organized, with overarching objectives mixed in with timelines, making it difficult to see progress across years. A project timeline is not clearly articulated with clear dependencies and mechanisms to adjust in case of need. Within the management plan, the roles of different staff and partners are not clearly defined.—

(2)   No weaknesses noted.

(3)   The total budget amount does not seem reasonable for the scope of the proposed project, exceeding the recommended range for this funding opportunity.

(4)   The total budget s does not seem reasonable for serving a state that enrolls a total of 200,000 students over a three yearthree-year period. If the goal as stated in the narrative is 25% of all students in the state at the end of three years (p. e27), this total number of students served (50,000) seems low when compared to the total budget.

Reader's Score: 16

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)
Reader #3:   **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Highest Coronavirus Burden		
1. Coronavirus Burden	20	16
Quality of Project Services and Project Plan		
1. Project Services/Plan	35	27
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	20
Sub Total	80	63
Total	80	63

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: NH Department of Education (S425B200016)

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 applicant offer several useful insights that indicate the uneven distribution of the coronavirus burden within the state. For example, in April 2020, New Hampshire's unemployment rate was 44th in the country at 17.1%, which disproportionately affected the state's most economically challenged rural communities. Such uneven distribution of burden in the state is reflected by infection rates themselves, as a quarter of infected citizens are from racial/ethnic minorities while making up just a tenth of the state's population. Together, such insights offer a compelling illustration of the New Hampshire's coronavirus burden.

   Weaknesses:

   The primary weakness is the lack of detail relating to the pandemic's effects on education specifically. Although the applicant speaks to some negative effects in their discussion of the Statewide Remote Learning Internet Device Survey, more specific data related to the impacts on education would have been useful (e.g., budget shortfalls, student participation rates during shutdown etc.) to understanding more about the state's coronavirus burden.

Reader's Score: 16

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:

Because the state will make its Learning Management System (LMS) available to public and non-public schools, this project demonstrates efforts to expand access to all students (p. 4).

As a strategy for improving access to high-quality distance learning opportunities, the project's plan to deploy a statewide LMS, which will be populated with high-quality curricula, should go a long way towards supporting the education of underserved students, particularly in light of the state's efforts to improve device and broadband access.

The proposal's primary strength is the creation of a statewide LMS that will provide the kind of nimbleness necessary for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond. The planned expansion of distance learning infrastructure will help teachers and students "flow smoothly between onsite, remote, and blended learning" (p. 2), which will likely prove beneficial in response the state's plans for returning to school this fall as well as to unpredictable school closures.

In addition to the LMS expansion, the project also proposes to increase access to high-quality course work for the state's students. A particular strength of this project element is that the courses developed will cohere with state's rollout of competency-based approach to earning school credits, which encourages and acknowledges learning beyond the classroom, such as in the workplace or internships (p. 4).

Teachers will be offered monetary incentives for making themselves and their expertise available to students during this project (p. 5).

The applicant notes that one key challenge discovered in the sudden shift to online learning was the inconsistency of LMS platforms in use across the state (p. 15), even sometimes within the same school (p. 25). The project's aim to centralize distance learning through a statewide LMS represents a clear and responsive effort to address that problem.

Another strength is that this proposal is in sync with the state's use of CARES Act funds to expand access to devices and the internet across the state, with emphasis on rural areas (p. 23).

Before attempting to expand LMS access, the state has already begun to address unequal access to devices and broadband internet in response to the coronavirus. This investment increases the likelihood that a statewide LMS expansion will be successful because underserved students (e.g., rural students) will be able to access the services provided through this grant.

The project's aim is an extension of the state's innovative Performance Assessment of Competency Education system (PACE) (p. 5). PACE reflects educational research indicating the benefits of some degree of local autonomy in the development and implementation of performance assessments instead of top-down standardized tests. Such assessments are aligned with the state's content standards.

Weaknesses:

While the proposal speaks to equality of access for underrepresented persons, there is a lack of specificity related to the specific barriers such persons have or may encounter, neither is there discussion of specific strategies to address such potential barriers.

A weakness in this proposal is the need for a clearer and more detailed framework for evaluating student outcomes. In other words, it is unclear what mechanisms are in place to ensure that increased opportunities for access translate into actual improvements in access and student outcomes.

A primary weakness in this proposal is the lack of research-based evidence for the activities described (e.g., expanding LMS access for rural students). As a result, whether and how empirical educational research has directed the architecture of this project is unclear. For example, it is unclear how expanded distance learning infrastructure will support the PACE assessment system.

Reader's Score: 27

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:

   In general, the management plan provides a detailed account of appropriate timelines and data-based milestones, which include opportunities for both students and parents to provide feedback on the LMS expansion and course development.

   The primary strength of the project's management plan and timeline is that the state will immediately use grant funds to purchase students LMS subscriptions so that all students can access it as early as September 2020 (p. 9). Given the potential for disruptions to brick-and-mortar learning in the coming school year, the state's plan to purchase subscriptions for this school year is a wise and responsible use of the grant funds.

   Additionally, given the challenges many teachers faced in the sudden shift to online teaching, the project proposes to provide teachers with technical and pedagogical support for distance learning and to begin that work in fall of 2020 (p. e26).

   Based on the application's budget narrative, the requested funds should be sufficient to support the proposed project. Within the budget narrative, the applicant has described the cost of each budget element and they align with the project's stated goals.

   Considering the project's four ambitious objectives, the general costs are reasonable based on detail provided in the budget narrative. For example, the project will make generous stipends available to expert educators to support the development of high-quality instructional content. Additionally, the project will involve the work of a grant manager whose job is to ensure project success.

   Also, the project aims to ensure that 75% of educational staff will receive training in the LMS, and that 75% of teachers will be trained to write effective blended and distance learning curricula (p. e27).
   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. Focusing on students alone, this project will cost approximately one-hundred fifteen dollars per student over the period of the grant while also supporting the development of courses and infrastructure that will extend beyond the grant, which is reasonable.

Weaknesses:

Although the management plan addresses several aspects of the project timeline, more detail is needed in relation to how progress towards project goals will be measured over the project's duration. A more detailed, year-by-year account of the timeline and how it supports project goals is needed.

The primary weakness in the proposal's budget account is the lack of specificity when it comes to purchasing third-party content. In the management plan, the applicant notes that project leaders will "identify at least five high-quality third-party vendors with educational content to make available through the LMS" (p. 11). Neither how such third-party vendors will be identified nor how the quality of their materials will be assessed is detailed in the proposal.

The project's stated goal to ensure that at least 25% of students have accessed content through the LMS seems overly modest, particularly since (1) the state will provide licenses for all students as early as September 2020 and (2) the state is requesting over ███████. This goal is also dissonant with the goal of supporting 75% of educators.

Reader's Score: 20

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