

**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: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

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	33
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	22
Sub Total	80	75
Total	80	75

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 REM - 2: 84.425B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

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 demonstrates Coronavirus burden by specifying Tennessee second highest proportion of revenue (57%) comes from sales taxes (p.e22) which a reduction in consumer spending, especially on taxable items, cause significant impact to the state's economy. The state cut education spending (p. e22) to meet an increased amount of health and safety obligations which lacked adequate support to train educators and families on virtual learning (p. e22). With a 25% pre-COVID achievement gap and decrease in proficiency levels since school closures in March, TN Department of Education modeling show a disproportionate impact on younger and rural students (p. e24).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted in this section of the application.

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:

The applicant present strategies for equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups traditionally identified as underrepresented. The proposal specifies importance of early grade literacy and cites recent data, 2019 assessment data, which indicate 15.8% below average ELA proficiency for grade 3 Black/Hispanic/NA students; 26.6% for EL (likely a proxy for national origin); and 24.5% for disability (e30-31). In addition, the state will require providers to accommodate IEP's and ILP's (p. e39). The applicant's recruitment strategy involves using community-based organizations currently serving affected populations, like Connexion and ARC (p. e38).

Sub-criterion 1- The applicant details a plan to minimize early grade literacy by creating capacity for supplemental instruction using an approved list of providers who meet standards of instructional quality, family engagement strategies, and are trained in the state's Foundational Skills Curriculum (pp. e31-e32). The project plan appears well-instrumented and capable of continuous monitoring of efficacy and support improvement over time (p. e33). The recruitment plan of underperforming students will focus on Title I schools or students receiving assistance (p. e34).

Sub-criterion 2- Eligible families will be assessed to receive technology, laptop, and broadband awards as needed (p. e35). The applicant's situation analysis identified a gap in broadband access which will be addressed through technology microgrants. The applicant proposes to focus on grades 1-3 to decrease an early year achievement shortfall.

Sub-criterion 3- Microgrants will expand broadband access which enable over 13,000 students receiving nearly 500,000 hours of online instruction.

Sub-criterion 4- The proposal includes a well-documented connection between early literacy and subsequent educational and career outcomes (p. e29).

Weaknesses:

The applicant is vague with describing achievement gaps and using the term economic disadvantage which is confusing. There's insufficient information identifying groups based on race or color, and gender groups are completely missing (p. e24, p. e31). Since families must respond to an invitation to apply, potential students from families without the requisite social capital may not access the microgrants.

Sub-criterion 1- No weaknesses were noted.

Sub-criterion 2- No weaknesses were noted.

Sub-criterion 3- No weaknesses were noted.

Sub-criterion 4- The applicant proposes to provide training, however, there is no instructional quality or academic attainment standards defined for approved providers (pp. e31-e32). Further, the specific pedagogical approach (p. e33) does not support (with citations) relevant research.

Reader's Score: 33

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- The applicant's management plan clearly identifies the internal TN Department of Education capacity for recruitment and management of outsourced providers (p. e50). Deliverables, roles, and responsibilities are clearly defined and outlined in the timeline (pp. e98-e101).

Sub-criterion 2- Appropriately to the structure of the proposal, the team appears strong in procurement and assessment skills (pp. e58-e86)

Sub-criterion 3- Using a linear scale which is based on the number of students served and task hours, the project appears to be structured and consist of the ability to pay outsourced providers.

Sub-criterion 4- Presuming supplemental instruction is one-on-one, the cost of [REDACTED] per hour is reasonable and the technology costs are reasonable and aligns with the current market.

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 1- The applicant's outsourced approach lacks description of building internal capacity, particularly on districts and schools' levels unless this approach is designated for recruitment.

Sub-criterion 2- No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 3- No weaknesses noted.

Sub-criterion 4- If learning will be asynchronous, and/or if the total hours delivered are in group settings or unattended using computer-based drills, the proposed cost of [REDACTED] per contact hour is unreasonable.

Reader's Score: 22

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

Reader #2: *****

	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	35
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	23
Sub Total	80	78
Total	80	78

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 REM - 2: 84.425B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

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 provides a comprehensive, detailed description of the context in Tennessee prior to, and during, the coronavirus outbreak. (p. e21) Specifically, due to tornadoes, many students were already out of school and many lacked access to their typical resources at home due to tornado damage, and the coronavirus exacerbated this situation for many students. The applicant further explains the economic impact of COVID-19, detailing budget considerations related to a decrease in sales tax revenue and high unemployment, which led to significant budget cuts to education. (p. e22) The applicant presents a compelling argument as to why the need is high in Tennessee due to the rural nature of much of the state coupled with higher than average poverty rates, with many lacking access to the technology necessary to learn remotely. (p. e23)

Weaknesses:

There were 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:

Strategies to ensure equal access: Resources for district leaders are available in both English and Spanish. (p. e26) TDOE also provided lessons on public television to ensure families lacking devices and internet would still be able to access learning opportunities. (p. e27) In addition, the applicant has devoted other federal funds to the purchase of additional assistive technology to help ensure equitable access for students with disabilities. (p. e28) The application describes a very strong communication plan to ensure that parents from underserved populations are adequately informed of the literacy supports available to them. (p. e38)

Sub-criterion 1: The project includes many components, while maintaining a sharp focus on literacy. For example, requiring digital literacy providers to state, in their response to the RFP, a family engagement strategy as a required element is an exceptional approach not often seen in many education-focused RFP's. (p. e32) The applicant is also requiring providers to differentiate their approach for SWD and EL students. A particularly strong component is the inclusion of "consumable workbooks or other hard-copy instructional materials" (p. e32) because their project focuses on grades 1-3 when children typically learn best with materials they can hold, or manipulate, as opposed to content presented solely on a screen. The applicant also requires providers to utilize achievement and satisfaction data to "reflect on and improve their program", submitting an "action plan" in order to be renewed for the following year, which is an exceptional approach to ensuring continuous improvement and high-quality learning providers. (p. e36)

Sub-criterion 2: The Tennessee Department of Education surveyed district leaders and stakeholders in early April, which is an excellent strategy for identifying specific gaps in services and infrastructure. Use of this data to inform actions and communication presents a strong approach to addressing the needs of students. (p. e25) The applicant also provides extensive detail about weaknesses in the area of literacy among elementary students, also disaggregating the data based on poverty and race. (p. e30)

Sub-criterion 3: The applicant provides extensive detail on the procurement process and the requirements that will be made of the providers who apply to participate. (p. e32-e33) The plan to increase access to remote learning, coupled with literacy-specific strategies and content, will effectively address the delayed effects of COVID-19 in the next 2-3 years by focusing on extremely important foundational skills in literacy. (p. e34-e35)

Sub-criterion 4: The applicant provides details about "econometric models" (p. e24) utilized to predict possible learning loss among certain subgroups of students, also citing a recent NWEA study. Partnering with the University of Tennessee to offer free sessions for principals on best practices in digital learning and leading remotely demonstrates a strong commitment to utilizing research and best practices to inform their work. (p. e28) This commitment is further demonstrated through another university partnership providing free training for teachers on digital learning/teaching. The applicant also used research to guide the project development and focus on early grades literacy. (p. e29) For example, providers will be required to train instructors in "the five components of reading science" (p. e36) and the applicant provides an exhaustive review of research literature on pages e40-e41.

Weaknesses:

Strategies to ensure equal access: No weaknesses were noted.

Subcriterion 1: No weaknesses were noted.

Subcriterion 2: No weaknesses were noted.

Subcriterion 3: No weaknesses were noted.

Subcriterion 4: No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 35

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:

Strengths:

Sub-criterion 1: The timelines for rolling out the open enrollment and program delivery are adequate and likely to facilitate successful implementation. (p. e44) The milestones presented, and performance targets are extremely detailed and well-designed, with strong alignment to strategies and objectives. (p. e98-e99) The project leadership team is detailed on page e100 and includes highly qualified personnel with diverse backgrounds likely to contribute to the broad perspectives necessary to ensure successful implementation.

Sub-criterion 2: The applicant used spring 2020 survey data to design their proposed use of funds to help ensure they have adequate resources to support families in need. (p. e47) TDOE has a solid plan for training providers to ensure their remote learning options are directly aligned with the TN curriculum. (p. e48)

Sub-criterion 3: The costs are reasonable given the depth and breadth of the significance of this project. Not only will the project address literacy weaknesses exacerbated by COVID-19, but it will provide important training to both teachers and parents and this increased knowledge will continue to serve them well beyond the life of the grant. For example, the detailed strategies for family engagement and support, and frequent solicitation of feedback from parents are likely to elicit benefits that persist well into the upper grades. (p. e46-e48) In addition, supporting students' foundational reading skills is likely to increase graduation rates, as indicated by many research studies demonstrating a link between 3rd grade reading skills and high school graduation.

Sub-criterion 4: The applicant's plan is to serve over 13,000 students through this project, which is likely to have a significant impact on the literacy rates among the state's most vulnerable young students.

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 1: No weaknesses were noted.

Sub-criterion 2: The applicant does not provide sufficient detail about how they arrived at the figure of [REDACTED] per hot spot. This does not seem sufficient to provide the equipment (e.g. router, modem) along with a full year of internet access/service to a family, especially those with multiple children/devices in use which would require stronger internet speeds. (p. e102) The amount of [REDACTED] per student or family may not be adequate to support internet access.

Sub-criterion 3: No weaknesses were noted.

Sub-criterion 4: No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 23

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

Reader #3: *****

	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	35
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	18
Sub Total	80	73
Total	80	73

Technical Review Form

Panel #2 - FY20 REM - 2: 84.425B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: State of Tennessee, Department of Education (S425B200027)

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:

Sub-criterion 2: Pages e20-25 present data that explains Tennessee's Covid-19 burden succinctly. The state experienced unprecedented tornadoes during the Covid-19 crisis which further exacerbated student access to computer hardware and internet for online learning.

The applicant details how the State budget diminished, which the state's Governor utilized educational funds to meet basic human health and shelter needs during Covid-19.

The applicant specifies how Microgrants would enable students and their families to access online learning to achieve closing the literacy gap. Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) describe steps taken in support of student learning since March (during Covid-19), such as PBS providing learning content during program hours, Ready Rosie app, K-3 Summer Reading Program, summer online professional development for teachers and principals, and the investment of \$7m in IDEA grant funds to assist students with disabilities (pages e26-29).

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 2: 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:

TDOE's project plan is inclusive of underrepresented groups and outlines strategies that ensures targeted groups will be included in services. Students identified to participate in the microgrants are "in grades 1-3 in public and non-public schools who have been identified as performing below grade level on literacy assessments and who either (a) attend a Title I or Title I eligible school, or (b) are considered economically disadvantaged through direct certification or free/reduced-price lunch eligibility" (page e34).

Pages e31-39 presents the project plan in narrative form and pages e98-99 in chart form.

Sub-criterion 1: The project plan narrative details how Priority 1 will be addressed: (1) the distribution of computer hardware and internet access to eligible K-3 students, (2) training of providers' tutors on the State's Foundational Skills curriculum, and (3) feedback loops through surveys. The evaluation plan includes the collection of student performance measures, focus groups, and family surveys (page e99).

Sub-criterion 2: In part A, the applicant describes the achievement gap and the students that need to improve their literacy skills. The plan explains that closing the literacy gap will be addressed through online tutoring for K-3 students. Their families will receive needed technology and broadband so that their students can be connected online to tutors trained on Tennessee's literacy curriculum.

Sub-criterion 3: Throughout the narrative, TDOE reflects on the gaps in literacy achievement as evidenced in testing results in grades 4 and 8 and how specific strategies will assist in improving student learning. The TDOE's plan is comprehensive in terms of provider training on the curriculum, communications strategies to engage parents in the learning, and supports to online learners.

Sub criterion 4: Page e41 discusses various research studies that support the TDOE's strategies

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 1: No weaknesses noted

Sub-criterion 2: No weaknesses noted

Sub-criterion 3: No weaknesses noted

Sub criterion 4: No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 35

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: The budget narrative (pages e101-102 and e107-109) are detailed and reflects all that is described in the project narrative - inclusive of responsibilities, timelines, and milestones. The funds show reasonable support of the project for 3 years. If there are 13,721 students and 493,968 service hours, each student may receive up to 36 hours of service.

Sub-criterion 2: Funding will adequately support the procurement of hardware and broadband for the identified families. The funding allotted to providers to train tutors and pay tutors for services rendered to students is reasonable and appropriate.

Sub-criterion 3: The bulk of the funding will be expended on the literacy tutoring program. Tutors are being trained on the Tennessee's literacy curriculum, so that students receiving tutoring should be successful on state assessments.

Sub criterion 4: The applicant demonstrates training to teachers and family will lead to improving student achievement. In addition, increasing student literacy show effective practices and beneficial to students as they progress in grade levels.

Weaknesses:

Sub-criterion 1: No weaknesses noted

Sub-criterion 2: No weaknesses noted

Sub-criterion 3: "TDOE requests a budget of \$ [REDACTED] for funding microgrants to support and serve eligible students in grades 1-3" (page e108). When the grant terminates, the expertise established through training providers may not continue. The applicant should state what efforts will be made to continue the program. See comment in Sub criterion 4 below.

Sub criterion 4: "The microgrants would provide 36 hours of service for 13,721 students (at a cost of \$31.75 per service hour), and will be delivered through 7 windows of service delivery:..." (page e108). The applicant provides no information regarding how the [REDACTED] in microgrants will be monitored to ensure student achievement.

Reader's Score: 18

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