

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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	34
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	22
Sub Total	80	76
Total	80	76

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - FY20 REM - 6: 84.425B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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:

To a great extent, the applicant provides clear details of the impact of COVID-19 on schools, students, and Texas residents. The applicant fully discusses the extent of the COVID-19 burden upon its residents, i.e., 1.8 million adults being unemployed (p. e18).

Educational issues are well-detailed for how they were ascertained, nature of the issues, and the interim remedies taken to assist children/youth in moving forward with academic progress, i.e., statewide needs assessment performed by the Texas Education Agency with LEA Superintendents at the commencement of school closures in the Spring 2020, identified gaps of educational materials at home, lack of statewide high-speed internet connectivity in all homes of students, lack of online summer learning educational programs, and lack of teachers' professional development for synchronous and asynchronous student learning (pp. e16-e17).

The applicant fully describes the impact of lack of adequate high-speed internet broadband services in the homes of students, i.e., a third of Texas students live in homes without access to both high-speed internet services and an adequate electronic learning device (p. e19).

Interim strategies to quickly address the identified needs and utilized during the last eight weeks of the school year and into the Summer 2020 are well-detailed and adequately met the sudden need for remote learning and keeping learning progressing, i.e., daily/weekly Texas Home Learning online curricular lessons in English and Spanish, learning plans for students to accomplish at home, statewide survey to the 354 school districts in the state to assess learning needs, remote dyslexia instruction, remote speech therapy, preparing/implementing paper-based instructional packets for 24% of students, Texas Home Learning Summer Instruction 2.0, and teacher professional development for remote learning and student hybrid learning (pp. e16-e17).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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:

(Equal Access)

The applicant provides clear plans for implementing its project to ensure students with disabilities and English Language Learners have equal access to both core academic instructional materials, but also materials to assist with English language development and/or areas identified as disabilities, i.e., specific dyslexia instruction and remote speech therapy (p. e17). A large portion of the project's activities centers on providing necessary English acquisition skills to ELL students, whether in blended-learning at school and at home or entirely at home with print versions or virtual online versions of instructional tools on open educational resources for core subject areas (p. e21).

(1)

To a great extent, the applicant's proposed project is an exceptional approach for addressing the needs of students, parents, and teachers who need to engage in hybrid or remote learning processes. Details are clearly provided for each of the three primary strategies to address learning: for students, for parents accessing the learning and assisting with their children's education at home/school, and for teachers who need to gain skills in implementing synchronous and

asynchronous student learning. Complete descriptions are given for the three strategies: Ensuring Access to Materials for English Language Learners, Supporting Parent Involvement and Engaging Families, and Implementing New Instructional Strategies in the Classroom and Remotely in Students' Homes (pp. e22-e25).

The proposed learning materials, online and also in printed formats, align with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards so that PK-12 students will progress towards mastery in the core subject areas (p. e21). The learning materials will be built upon interoperability standards and linked to the state's Learning Management System for trackability of each student's mastery of skills and course completion (p. e22).

The project activities to better engage parents in their children's learning class choices and learning styles, especially for remote learning, is well-detailed and appropriate to assist students progress towards learning at and beyond grade level, i. e., regional cohort groups established for engaging the communities and parents in educational material reviews, brainstorming new ideas, conducting parent feedback, and providing specific techniques to assist students (pp. e23-e24).

The teachers' professional development (Texas Home Learning 3.0) is well-detailed and includes a series of training modules that will support evidence-based instruction in the students' homes and will specifically address five effective professional development standards for teachers of ELL students, i.e., build upon each child's foundation of skills, knowledge and expertise and measure changes in student performance (pp. e25-e26).

(2)

To a great extent, the applicant describes its process of requesting input from school superintendents, communities, parents, teachers in assessing the gaps in services and infrastructures that would need to be addressed due to the COVID-19 caused school closures.

Gaps identified include lack of digital learning technical devices for each child that can be accessed at home via high-speed internet connectivity, digital learning resources aligned to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, lack of efficient software to facilitate remote learning, lack of progress monitoring tools to assist students/parents/teachers in assessing if students have mastery of materials, and lack of intensive teacher professional development for operational delivery support as they implement the strategies and tools (pp. e17,

The applicant responds to all gaps with specific project strategies which all lead to students becoming more engaged in mastery learning, whether in a classroom, hybrid educational setting, or at home, i.e., quality core subject matter to Texas academic standards being provided in on a platform (and in print) that support high-level learning in a free virtual or blended learning atmosphere (p. e29).

(3)

A great likelihood exists that the planned services and programs for the students, parents, and teachers will greatly expand remote access to learning, especially for ELL students and will bring improvement in student outcomes of increasing in English language proficiencies and higher levels of academic achievement. The investment made to the availability of online courses, PK-6 reading and math online content aligned to state standards, and parental involvement in the selection of coursework has the likelihood of increasing students' mastery of core subjects and literacy levels. With the extra attention to ELL students, a gap of achievement between ELL students and non-ELL students has a greater opportunity to close (p. e28).

(4)

To a great extent, the applicant's project is well-informed from recent educational research regarding students' education levels in remote learning settings (home), loss of instructional time and potential learning loss, parental involvement in learning, and using e-learning.

The crucial beginning of the conversation of remote learning is based on the key study by McKinsey, 2020, in an educational research forecast of the impact of potential student learning when engaged in varying amounts of remote learning, in-class learning, and no instruction (p. e27). Other important research of City, et al., Instructional Rounds in

Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning, 2009, links the essential interactions between the teacher and student in order to bring higher levels of student learning (pp. e29, e74).

Other research studied for this project also included the research of Kazakoff, et al., 2018, which studied effective blending learning approaches for elementary school reading instruction of English Language Learners (p. e75).

The applicant also clearly describes the evidence base of its parent/family involvement approach in engaging parents with research from the Best Start Resource Center, 2011 (p. e30).

Weaknesses:

(Equal Access)

No weaknesses found.

(1)

No weaknesses found.

(2)

No weaknesses found.

(3)

The applicant does not clearly describe that its project activities will be offered to students who are not enrolled in public schools in the state. The applicant makes reference to receiving input from "school district[s]" and "LEAs," but it does not fully describe a needs assessment or project activities being available to schools not contained within the public-school entities in the state (pp. e22-e23).

4)

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 34

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 clearly identifies some of the key personnel identified to lead and support in the planning and implementing of each of three primary project strategies and alignment to the project objectives, i.e., Deputy Commissioners of Special Populations and School Programs will lead the Activity 1: Ensuring Access for English Language Learners with support from several state level Department of Education Directors, including the Director of Strategy and Innovation and Remote Learning (p. e37).

A timeline for milestones/activities is presented and clearly indicates which quarter and project year milestones will be accomplished, i.e., in Year One Quarters 1-4, Build PK-5 English Language Tools (p. e38). The Texas Education Agency's Division of Federal Programs will continually monitor the project's budget and spending and keep the project within the budget (p. e38).

(2)

To a great extent, the applicant's project's budget is designed to fully support the project's personnel, necessary supplies, contractual components of digital framework, technical assistance, and educators' professional learning (pp. e82-e87). The administrative costs (██████████) are very reasonable and below the grant guideline of the 5% threshold for such expenses, i.e., administrative personnel salaries/fringe benefits are at ██████████ of total project budget (pp. e82-e83).

(3)

The project total three-year budget of ██████████ is well-detailed for types of expenditures and is aligned with the project's objectives and potential impact upon educators, students, and parents. The contractual services form the largest portion of the budget at ██████████ to be utilized for the three primary grant activities of Development of English Learner Support Framework, Technical Assistance Intermediary for Regional Public Engagement Cohorts, and Development of Embedded Professional Learning (p. e84). The personnel salaries and contractual costs align with the applicant's project objectives of increasing ELL students' access to online open resources, improving their academic proficiencies to be at/beyond grade level, increasing parental engagement in accessing online resources, and establishing more efficient educator professional development regarding online open source materials/courses (pp. e35-e36). These specific objectives and outcomes leading to students making grade level progress and avoiding learning loss due to the COVID-19 school closures

(4)

The applicant somewhat demonstrates that this project is cost effective and reasonable in cost with a per-student or per-parent or per-teacher cost estimated for each of the three primary project activities/objectives. The per-student costs range from ██████████ per student in Project Year One for Activity 1 for Ensuring Access to English Learners to lower per-student costs in Project Years 2 and 3: ██████████ per student for each year (p. e39). Lower per-student costs are noted for the other two Activities/Objectives, and range from \$.07 per-student/██████████ per-teacher cost for Teacher Professional Development in Project Year 2 (p. e39).

Weaknesses:

(1)

The applicant does not clearly detail the project responsibilities of the two new Project Managers (p. e38). Also, it is

unclear which project personnel are responsible for the quarterly milestones listed in the chart depicting project activities/milestones and timelines of completion (p e38).

(2)

No weaknesses found.

(3)

No weaknesses found.

(4)

No comparable studies of cost-per student or cost-per teacher are provided to demonstrate the true reasonableness of the project cost per-student and/or cost per-teacher and/or per-parent (p. e37).

Reader's Score: 22

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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	25
Sub Total	80	80
Total	80	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - FY20 REM - 6: 84.425B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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:

(2) The applicant presents a detailed description of the State's coronavirus burden based on indicators and information factors other than those required in the application that shows the importance of the severity of COVID-19 on students, parents, and schools in the State. The State ranks 41st to 60th percentile coronavirus burden as cited by the US Department of Education. Currently, over 148,000 coronavirus cases have been cited in the State with nearly 2,4000 deaths (8 people per capita). The numbers continue to climb daily. State data indicated three counties represent most deaths (43%) and of confirmed cases of coronavirus cases (48.5%). In addition to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the health of residents, the applicant states as of March 2020, 1.8 million unemployment claims have been filed, which reflects a 10-fold increase from 2019. The State has 8 in 10 students designated as low income and almost four in ten of those new students are English Learners. The State ranks second in the nation in the percent of English Learners. The applicant conveys that one out of five Texas students are English Learners, and 51.7% of that group are enrolled in English as a Second Language (e18-e20).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

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 describes several effective strategies to ensure access to project services for English Language Learners by enhancing curriculum and remote learning resources to meet the needs of English Learners. For example, the applicant seeks funds to support grade level remote instruction in PK-12 grades in the content areas of English, math, science, and social studies with an emphasis on English Learners, parent engagement, and professional learning to support teachers of English Learners. For example, the applicant will provide adapted materials that meet the language levels of individuals regardless of age or grade level (e22 & e81).

(1) The applicant describes proposed project services that demonstrates an exceptional approach to meet and focus on Absolute Priority 2 by building on existing and initiatives to develop and expand access to high quality courses for all local education agencies in the State. The applicant will follow the State's strategic plan to achieve the goal of ensuring every child is prepared for success in college, career, or military. The proposed project will provide high-quality teaching and learning materials, and remote and in person learning through open educational resources designed for core subjects that are aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Standards. The applicant will place all materials on a content delivery platform for synchronous or asynchronous learning. The platform will incorporate a newly statewide Learning Management System or be integrated in a district current existing Learning Management System (e27).

(2) The applicant provides a needs assessment that reviews gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructure and opportunities and plans approaches for eliminate barriers impacting the target population. The applicant indicates that COVID-19 has impacted schools in a significance manner where instruction has been lost and may in future be greater. The reality of the findings creates a need to develop high quality remote learning guidance to reduce instruction loss. The applicant indicates English Learners are at a greater disadvantage of being impact by the loss of face-face interaction which normally would allow for teachers to customize support for English Learners. The applicant identifies an existing achieve gap between English Learners and other learners. The applicant reports in the 2018-2019 school year (24%) of English Learners meet standards, while 50% of their Non-English Learners met the academic standards. The applicant proposes to invest in quality and available resources that provide access to English Learners in effort to close the achieve gap. The applicant documents current literature that emphasizes that current remote learning programs do not have the capability of support for English Learners. The applicant recognizes from a review of relevant research that digital learning resources can be a great tool for English Learners while at school, but at home there is an absence of these tools to continue learning for students during their time away from the school.(e27-29).

(3) The proposed project intends to offer services that has the capacity to increase project services and encompass the needs of the target population by extending access to remote learning and enhancing student outcomes. For example, the applicant will ensure access for English Learners who make up 1 out 5 the State's learners by proving resources and courses are made in Spanish for each grade level. The applicant plans to concentrate on serving English Learners in K-5 by adding 12 courses in English Language and Math content to support learning. The innovative action will build on existing learning materials to support English language acquisition for performance based on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System and aligned to grade level for content level. Additionally, the proposed project will provide professional development opportunities up to 30,000 teachers serving 5.4 million students in efforts to enhance their ability to be successful in the virtual classroom (e33-e35).

(4) The applicant planned project services that reflect recent research and effective practice to expand access to remote learning options and improve student outcomes. The applicant has reviewed relevance and current literature focus on teacher, student, and contents interaction. The applicant plans on incorporating professional development to shift

teacher beliefs and actions on enhancing student learning. The applicant understands research supports high-quality teaching and learning resources and parent engagement in schools as having a significance impact on student learning, and will include those components in project services that focuses on remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused the displacement of children from face-to face interaction in a traditional physical classroom. The applicant plans on utilizing proven models of innovation focused on serving English Learners (20%;1,110,000) and other learners. For example, the applicant will explore how blended learning through technology can impact student learning (e29-e36).The applicant provides a list of references that support the inclusion of evidence-based practices in the proposed project (e74-77).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

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:

(1) The applicant provides a well-organized management plan that emphasizes meeting the planned project objectives on time and within budget. The management plan completely explains what staff member will be responsible for carrying out the tasks to meet project objectives. Also, the applicant provides a detailed chart that displays key staff responsibilities. This organizational structure ensures that the project is on track for completion. The applicant has created milestones to guarantee evaluation of progress is made to activities for successfully completion. The applicant presents a well-designed chart that shows grant activities, milestones, quarterly and yearly actions. The applicant proposes to engage in ongoing monitoring of formative data on a quarterly basis. The applicant specifies the divisions of the agency that will be tasked with reviewing fiscal compliance and programmatic review of the grant (e36-e39).

(1) The applicant clearly identifies the project team and their credentials. The applicant describes well-prepared resumes that indicates professional experience, essential qualifications, and knowledge for guiding the grant to successfully completion. For example, the Deputy Commissioner of Special Populations and Monitoring has extensive experience as a leader of state education divisions. He has experience at the middle and high school levels as a principal, special education teacher, and general education teacher. He has an advanced degree (Master of Arts) in curriculum and instruction and a Pre-12 Special Education Certification (e36-e37 & e44-e71). The applicant listed in the budget narrative the time commitments of the full-time key staff dedicated to effectively manage the grant for over the three-year period

(e82).

(2) The applicant vividly describes in the narrative budget each line item required to fund the planned project. The applicant presents in the budget narrative total costs correlated to project activities. The proposed project costs listed are personnel, fringe benefits, contractual expenses, supplies, and indirect costs. For example, the applicant lists all supplies per year, and lists the needed supplies (sticky chart pads, and easel pad markers) and their costs (e81-e87). The Governor of the State has provided a letter to reflect his full support of the State's education agency as the lead state agency for the facilitation of the grant (e43-e44).

(3) The costs appear applicable in relation to attaining the objectives and accomplishing the expected project events. There are no irrelevant costs designated in the budget. The applicant presents an itemized budget that explains total costs related with implementing the grant for three years. For example, the total contractual cost is broken down by year and includes a description of the project activity. The applicant will follow the Statewide Procurement Division procedures for state agency procurement. The total budget requested amount of [REDACTED] will support the project over the three-year grant period (e81-e87).

(4) The applicant presents costs that are suitable in comparative to number of persons to be served and to the projected outcomes and advantages. The applicant describes the purposed use of funds, reasonable of objective funds, and reasonable of per pupil costs as outlined in a detailed chart which consists of the activity, cost per year, and participants served. For example, the applicant estimates a cost of the project to be [REDACTED] per student for implementing activity one, which is cost-effective for the delivery of high-quality and equitable resources to English Learners served by the proposed project (e39-e41).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found

Reader's Score: 25

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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	34
Quality of Management Plan / Adequacy of Resources		
1. Management Plan/Resources	25	22
Sub Total	80	76
Total	80	76

Technical Review Form

Panel #6 - FY20 REM - 6: 84.425B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Texas Education Agency (S425B200033)

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:

Factors identified by the applicant:

The applicant identifies several factors to indicate a high Coronavirus burden, including the following:

- o The racial variance in the percentage of fatalities (40.5% White, 25.8% Hispanic, 18.2% Unknown, 12.8% African American, 2% Asian, and .8% Other);
- o The concentration of fatalities and confirmed cases in densely populated counties (representing 43.3% of fatalities and 48.5% of confirmed cases); and
- o The 10-fold increase in unemployment cases compared to 2019 (1.8 million claims filed) (page e18).

The applicant also shared factors related specifically to their students that would indicate a high Coronavirus impact, including an increase in students at home alone because of school closures. With 5.4 million students (over 10% of total US students), an additional 770k students in the last decade, 8 in 10 classified are as low income, and 4 in 10 of new students are ELL, Texas now ranks second in the nation in the percent of EIs (one in five students) and ninth nationally in students qualifying for F/RL (60.2%). In addition, Texas is extremely diverse (52.5% Hispanic or Latino, 27.4% White, 12.6% Black or African American, 4.5% Asian, 2.4% two or more races, .4% American Indian and Alaska Native, and .2% Pacific Islander. Considering that school is a resource for language acquisition and meals for a large percentage of the population, not being able to attend school face-to-face presents a burden Texas (pages e18 and e19).

Although connectivity has also been an issue, the applicant discusses robust actions it will take to address the disparities in access to connectivity through the launch of Operation Connectivity Task Force, which has resulted in the state providing free, high-quality instructional materials to all students. Through an April survey to 354 school districts with 2.2M students, they found that only 60% of schools indicated that they would share a "plug and play" Home Learning Model with teachers or families, and districts estimated that 24% of students needed paper packets. 3 weeks later, the results were very similar with 69% reporting that they planned to use Home Learning Model resources (page e19 and e20). The gap still exists for ensuring high-quality instructional materials to all students.

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses:

None 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:

Strengths:

Ensuring Equal Access

The applicant focuses on ensuring equal access to English Learners by developing and aligning high quality instructional materials to serve English language acquisition. They are deemed "high quality" because they provide embedded access to language resources, provide adapted materials regardless of age or grade level, provide step-by-step instructions in the target language, and provide accessibility tools to families (page e22 and e23). With one in five students qualifying as ELL, this approach ensures equal access for a minimum of twenty percent of their student population who might not otherwise be able to access instruction.

The applicant also describes how they will increase parent engagement and solicit their feedback through the recruitment, training, and support of public engagement specialists who will coordinate the solicitation, incorporation, and reporting on the feedback from the parent groups (page e23 and e24). By keeping parents informed about course availability, parents then become a resource for ensuring equal access.

Exceptional Approach

The applicant recognizes the pivotal role that teachers play in ensuring that students receive a high-quality education, especially in a remote environment. As such, the applicant describes the training modules that support evidence-based sheltered instruction and culturally and linguistically responsive strategies that support effective instruction to EIs (page e25). The modules will be based on the 5 foundational principles of effective PD for teachers of EIs outlined on page (e25 and e26).

The applicant also described how real time progress monitoring for any teacher/student activities that are completed online, providing teachers the data they need to adjust instruction for student needs (page e26).

To allow for students' and parents' schedules, the system will incorporate both synchronous and asynchronous options and coaching opportunities via video conferencing, providing multiple avenues for instruction to meet the diverse needs of students (page e26). This flexibility will ensure the success of the project.

Specific Gaps or Weaknesses

The applicant addressed a thorough understanding of their student population by delineating three categories of students in remote learning environment, including students who experience some learning progress, students who experience minimal learning progress, and students who receive no instruction at all. The learning loss could range from as few as 3-4 months to 12-14 months of loss, and ELs are especially vulnerable to learning loss because of COVID-19 (page e27). This is due to access to technology, teachers needing PD, and materials misalignment with EL grade levels (page e27).

The achievement gap between ELs and their peers, which is currently listed as 24% to 50% respectively, will continue to widen because of a lack of high-quality resources that are aligned with TEKS standards and equivalent levels of materials for non-ELs (page 28). This project demonstrates that this gap will be reduced upon implementation.

Likelihood of Expanding Access/Lead to Improvements

The applicant outlined how the focus of the grant will be to support resources for K-5 ELs whereby each course developed for the typical K-5 student an equivalent course or resource will be developed or adapted for ELs (page e33). The focus will be placed on ELAR and math and the Spanish language equivalents in grades K-5. This will result in the development of resources for five language developmental levels for six grades for a total of 30 additional mini-courses (page 34).

The applicant also described a plan to target EL families so that they know and use the system, targeting the seven regions with growing EL students, which includes 165k ELs and their families (page e34).

Reflects Up-to-Date Knowledge

By providing targeted data feedback and professional development to up to 300k teachers who serve 5.4 million students, the project will improve the teachers' ability to interact and engage in authentic learning opportunities, enhance skills to instruct in virtual environments, and provide teacher-specific data and coaching opportunities (page e35). This approach responds to the immediate needs brought about by COVID-19 and to ongoing needs to close the gap in instruction for ELs.

Weaknesses:

Ensuring Equal Access

The applicant stated that the regional cohorts will target areas with a high density of EL students, but there is no discussion about the engagement specialists who will ensure that the targeted EL parents will populate the cohorts (pages e23 and e24).

One point lost.

Exceptional Approach

None noted.

Specific Gaps or Weaknesses

None noted.

Likelihood of Expanding Access/Lead to Improvements

None noted.

Reflects Up-to-Date Knowledge

None noted.

Reader's Score: 34

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:

Adequacy of the Plan

The applicant provides a clear delineation of duties, including Deputy Commissioners of Special Populations and Monitoring, School Programs, and Educator Support (page e36), denoting the importance of this project to the state of Texas. The applicant provides Figure 6 (page e37) that lists the project activities and responsible staff, beginning with the lead for each activity and the supports for each activity. The activities align with the three areas of focus for this grant:

1. Ensuring Access for ELs.
2. Parent Involvement and Engaging Families.
3. Extending the Impact of Great Teachers (page e27).

The applicant provides an implementation plan with activities and milestones to clearly delineate for all involved how the project is progressing at any stage of the project. Depicted in Figure 7 (page e38), each area of focus is color coded and broken into clear steps to be completed each year of the grant, including the pre-grant period.

Not only has the applicant provided a clear plan with clear activities and milestones, the applicant has explained the monitoring process as involving quarterly feedback loops with annual data step-backs, and they clarify that the Div. of Fed. Programs will conduct the annual financial review, and the THL team will conduct the programmatic review as an explanation of their intention for continuous improvement (page e39).

Funds will Support Project

In Figure 8: Per-Child Costs of THL Initiative Components, the applicant delineates cost per area of focus over the grant period. \$10,500,000 of the total requested amount of [REDACTED] is devoted to serving students while the remaining \$10,500,000 will be spent on parent and teacher programming (page e39). For each activity, the majority of the spending is done in Y1 to build out the programming and infrastructure needed for all three activities.

Costs are Reasonable: Objectives, Design, and Significance

Given the large number of EL students (1,080,000), parents (targeting 7 regions), and teachers (300k+) impacted by this program and the potential to transform the education of Texas' ELs, the costs are reasonable. Because the design leverages existing programs, tools, and resources, the design aligns with their strategic plan to support strong future outcomes for students in Texas (page e40).

Costs are Reasonable: Number of Persons Served/Anticipated Results

The cost per participant is high in Y1 and tapers off in Y2 and Y3. In Y1, the cost is \$5 per student, \$4.55 per parent, and \$19.30 per teacher, and in Y2, the cost drops to \$2.27 for students, \$2.27 for parents, and \$3.33 (page e39). In Y3, the

cost remains the same for students and parents, but the cost for teachers drops to \$0. Considering that the allotment for bilingual students is \$20.16 and this project will impact a majority of EL students, the costs associated with EL students for this project are reasonable (page e40). Since this project is developing the foundations for the parent project, the costs are reasonable (page e39), and because TEA is leveraging an existing system for teachers, it is able to build it out at a lower expense than if they were building it from scratch (page e41).

Weaknesses:

Adequacy of the Plan
None noted.

Funds will Support Project
None noted.

Costs are Reasonable: Objectives, Design, and Significance

The applicant doesn't provide a clear timeline for the frequency of formative and summative reporting to ensure the desired continuous improvement, nor does the applicant delineate who is responsible for creating the reporting and ensuring that action steps are created as a result of the reporting (page e39).

Two points lost.

Costs are Reasonable: Number of Persons Served/Anticipated Results

In Figure 8: Per-Child Costs of THL Initiative Components, the applicant lists 15M students being served in Y1, Y2, and Y3 (page e39); however, the applicant indicated that there were only 5.4 million students in the state altogether (page e18) and one out of five students are EL students (approximately 1,080,000 students) (page e18), giving rise to uncertainty about the calculation of the cost per student.

One point lost.

Reader's Score: 22

Status: Submitted
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