

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 12:34 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	20
Sub Total	35	28
Scaling		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Scaling	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	25	18
Sub Total	25	18
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	19
Sub Total	20	19
Total	100	83

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly explained three barriers (1) pregnant women deterred of serving as Coaching with Impact, (2) childcare responsibilities to participate in professional development, and (3) lack of computer technology skills (pg. e11). The applicant provided statistics about reading proficiency nationally and by categories to demonstrate the importance of reading on writing proficiency. For example, "34% of eighth-grade students are proficient in reading (NCES, 2020) but only 27% are proficient in writing (NCES, 2012) and for eighth grade, as writing proficiency rates for students from low-income families, Black students, and Latinx students are 12%, 11%, and 14%, respectively (NCES, 2012)" (pg.e28). The applicant provided citations to support the importance of the effectiveness of teaching to improve academic achievement, social and emotional competencies, and later-life outcomes.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly indicate how the professional development would support the target population to be served. The effective and reliable instructional teachers' effectiveness has not been identified (pg.e26) and the sensitive test on the outcomes by training CWI coaches who focus on student proficiency in writing (pg.e27-e28) were not clearly explained.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

The applicant stated that the overall goal of the project is “to refine, scale, test, and sustain the CWI program and inform further work in the field” (pg.e34). To accomplish the proposed goal, the applicant presented three objectives, outcomes, and measures (pg.e35-e36).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly state target for some of the measures such as “Online coaching logs and coach and teacher interviews indicate completed cycles” (pg.e35) and “Number of newsletters distributed, shared, and opened” (pg.e36). The objectives proposed were not clearly specified to reflect the coaching activity.

Reader's Score: 6

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated that a randomized controlled trial (RCT) will be used as a design of the proposed project to address goals and objectives presented in the Strategies, Outcomes, and Measures for Key Project Objectives (pg.e35-e36) and the logic model (pg.e33). The activities proposed would address the needs of the teachers to support the increase of academic achievement desired.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly detailed three types of inquiring that would be used in the proposed project to understand (1) instructional coaching with fidelity: to redefine the scaffolding scale design through the implementation experiences, (2) teacher’s engagement with professional learning (PL): to understand teachers’ motivation to implement the intervention, and (3) implementation of evidence-based instructional practice: to generate evidence of the implementation process (pg.10-11).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly indicated that the CWI intervention would improve efficiency and productivity by improving teachers’ productivity in the classroom because coaches would be supporting student’s reading deficiencies impacting student outcomes; leveraging technology to monitor the students’ progress; and considering current costs

Sub

of the intervention (pg.e37). The applicant clearly explained that the increased knowledge of coaches of CWI would support students, students' academic outcomes would be improved, and use of the technology to monitor students' progress.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly indicate how the time of coaches would impact teachers' use of time in the classroom; thus, impacting the teachers' productivity.

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly described the different activities and infrastructure supports to implement the CWI intervention with fidelity to address the barriers preventing the desired outcomes. The strategies called Scaling Scaffolds aim to address variation in a coaching capacity and coaching effectiveness (pg.15). The activities to be implemented are online and face-to-face training to become familiar with the impact cycle and practice the instructional activities; a web-based platform to monitor coaches; one-on-one coaching meetings to monitor the progress of the implementation of the intervention with fidelity; coaching videoconferencing to provided just-in-time for problem-solving coaching issues; meetings with partners to discuss the implementation successes and challenges; and measuring of scaling success (94% threshold for adequate implementation) (pg.e38-e40).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly indicate what entails in the statement "After 3 years of coaching with fidelity, coaches are eligible to receive ICG Certification" (pg.e39). The applicant indicated "The coaching champions are carefully selected, trained, and rigorously supported by ICG leadership" (pg.e39); however, it was not clear how the selection process of "coaching champions" would happen.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly detailed the dissemination process of the proposed project to support further development and replication of the intervention. The applicant indicated that the dissemination processes would be led by Learning Forward (LF) to provide findings such as the use of the program in different contexts, key practices, and project lessons learned of the proposed project to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers (pg.e40). The applicant

Sub

explained how Learning Forward, ICG, and AIR would disseminate information based on each of the organization's capacity.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly detailed the adequacy of personnel, resources, and management capacity to scale the proposed intervention through the partnering with school districts and other agencies such as ICG and LF. The applicant provided a list of AIR-led IES contracts to demonstrated AIR's capacity to implement the proposed project. The applicant also provided a brief explanation of AIR's roles and experience to support the implementation of the proposed project (pg.e44-e46); CV's for key personnel (pg. e71-e112).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly explain how the integrity of the independent evaluation would be maintained when AIR would be performing the evaluation of the proposed project. The applicant did not clearly indicate in the structure how the coaches would support the scaling of the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 7

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

The applicant presented the potential significance for students pursuing a bachelor's degree and associate's degree (pg.e46). The cost per-year of improved instruction for a student is \$91.

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant indicated that "the per-year cost of improved instruction for a student is \$91" (pg.e46), the applicant did not clearly explain the cost of the proposed project based on the objectives and design. The cost of the proposed project in regard to coaches and teachers was not clearly stated.

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

The applicant explained that the sustainability of the proposed project hinges on building capacity within the schools to scale effective PL focused on evidence-based practices (pg.e47). Moreover, foundation support would be sought (pg.e47).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly provide a sustainability plan after the federal funds end. In addition, it was not clearly stated the commitment of appropriate entities to continue supporting the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) 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.

Strengths:

The applicant provided a management plan including milestones, objectives, strategies (pg.e35-e36), the organization responsible, and timeline (pg.e146); which would allow the applicant the monitoring of the proposed project. The applicant clearly provided information to determine the feasibility to achieve the objectives (pg.e34-e36) of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities (AIR-pg.e162-e163, Learning Forward-pg.e170, and ICG (pg.e45), timelines (pg.e146), and milestones (pg.e146) for accomplishing project tasks.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated the seven research questions guiding the proposed study (pg.e48). The applicant will conduct a blocked cluster RCT, randomly assigning 80 middle schools to treatment and control conditions (pg.e49). The applicant acknowledged the issue of meeting WWC standards due to bias by late joiners (pg.e50).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address attrition for participants in the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly provided information about key components, outcomes and measurable thresholds (95% of the 6 days of preparatory training and participate in at least three quarters of the just-in-time group coaching and individual coaching conversations.) (pg.e50). The analyses of power based on the sample size needed to detect the impact of the intervention was clearly explained (pg.e147-e148). The applicant clearly indicated the analyses of mediating effects (pg.e158).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly described the methods of evaluation to provide valid and reliable data for relevant outcomes. For example, the applicant clearly explained the reliability of the coding for the CLASS instrument to be performed by certified AIR CLASS observers; to measure students' cognitive self-regulation, two instruments would be used Attention Control Scale and the Inhibitory Control Scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89 for both scales); and to assess the impact of the CWI intervention on students' writing proficiency, students' state ELA scores would be collected and analyzed (pg.e52-e53).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	20
Sub Total	35	28
Scaling		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Scaling	20	17
Sub Total	20	17
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	25	18
Sub Total	25	18
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	19
Sub Total	20	19
Total	100	82

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

With many districts focused on coaching approaches, this proposed project is structured to help districts better understand the elements of coaching that are most effective (page 3). This can build on strategies districts are already using and aware of, making the information gathered a better fit into day-to-day efforts of current teachers and coaches.

The applicant cites significant and appropriate research about studies that improve teacher effectiveness (page 3), supporting their description of the educational problem – ineffective professional learning programs, specifically programs that impact student achievement.

Applicant also discusses that while many districts have coaches, their roles are not often clear and they are trained in more general coaching terms versus specific instructional approaches.

The applicant clearly defines the focus of the project – writing proficiency coaching to close achievement gaps in middle school and beyond. The focus area is well supported with data demonstrating the gap on NAEP testing between White students and students. The applicant also comprehensively presents why the focus on writing at the middle school level is so significant with additional research (page 5).

Weaknesses:

Additional details on how this approach and intervention impacts students' social emotional learning is needed.

Additional details on why the CWI intervention is the appropriate choice, as the intervention is also needed. Information on how CWI embeds coaching and SEL strategies, beyond teacher reflection (page 6) is needed.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

The applicant presents the program design in phases – identify, learn, and improve (page 8). This structure provided a good foundation for the specific details included in design.

The proposed program objectives, strategies, and outcomes are thorough and specified (page 12-13).

Weaknesses:

Many of the outcomes presented are process oriented. Additional details on the measurable teacher behavior changes and student outcomes are needed.

Additional information about the current state of writing in the partner districts is needed. A more complete picture of how this plan incorporates current writing instruction at the middle school is needed.

Reader's Score: 8

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

Details on the needs of the district, teachers, and students are presented (pages 6-8). The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the current structure of PL cycles at the district and teacher level.

Significant details are provided on how the applicant will address the needs of the teacher participants, resulting in student engagement, in this work (page 8).

Weaknesses:

Additional details on training for coaches and how they will be trained to “annotate the playbook to fit local student needs” (page 8) are needed. Details on how the playbook will address students’ SEL needs are also needed.

Part of the challenge is providing coaches with the skills and knowledge to be effective coaches. An additional challenge is the timings and structures of coaching. More information on how the CWI cycles will be built into a coaches days is needed.

Details on how writing was chosen as the area of focus is needed. Additional information on how this is related to other writing programs across the target schools is needed.

Additionally, information on the current coaching cycle districts are engaged in and why CWI is needed would better illustrate the fit of the intervention. Details about how this coaching cycle is different from current approaches

Sub

district coaches are using is needed.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

Strengths:

The applicant identifies three areas of ongoing inquiry – scale instructional coaching with fidelity; how coaching can motivate teacher PL; and how to help teachers implement evidence-based practices effectively. These are all areas of inquiry that could benefit from more rigorous studies as evidenced by the lack of representation in the WWC.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant identifies three areas of ongoing inquiry, there is not adequate evidence presented that this study will provide the information needed to fully support these areas. For instance, the theory of action (page 10) does not clearly address fidelity of implementation.

Additionally, these areas of inquiry as assumptions made on behalf of the design of CWI. Additional details on how the structure of CWI explicitly addresses these areas of inquiry are needed.

Reader's Score: 4

4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.

Strengths:

The applicant uses current data to illustrate the salary range of coaches (page 14), noting that this study is aimed at making coaching approaches more effective. These are salaries districts already pay and don't represent an increase of district funding.

Weaknesses:

The use of technology for training and data collection processes is included as a strategy for effectiveness in interactions between teachers and coaches (page 14). Research or previous data to support this claim is needed.

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that

Sub

address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

Applicant includes a description of Scaling Scaffolds to address potential barriers to scaling (page 10 and 15).

The applicant identifies a number of appropriate strategies they will employ to ensure fidelity on a larger scale (page 15).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include a clear description of the overall scaling goal. Additional information on how this will be scaled within schools (across other departments) is needed.

The applicant does not address how the coach training builds on previous coach training (page 15) and how the time commitment to this project is embedded into their day. Additional information on how the coach training will lead to scaling the effort within and beyond the current schools is needed.

The applicant's focus is on scaling coaching efforts, but does not address how this coaching approach addresses and measures social emotional learning. Additional details on the approach to scale efforts to address SEL outcomes is needed.

Reader's Score: 8

2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

Applicant outlines a variety of mechanisms to support dissemination efforts across diverse stakeholders. Partners will use their networks to share the learnings of this study (page 18).

Weaknesses:

A timeline associated with the proposed dissemination approaches may be unrealistic (3 conferences in one year). More specific information around the types of conferences and journal articles is needed.

Reader's Score: 9

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant

Sub

period.

Strengths:

The applicant provides justification and OESE guidance on serving as both the project lead and the independent evaluator. This included language is needed to ensure the structure is allowable. (page 20).

AIR has extensive experience leading and evaluating large, federal awards. As such the organization has appropriate procedures in place to fulfill both the project management and evaluation roles outlined in this proposal. The applicant describes specific previous grants overseen by AIR on page 21.

The applicant describes the roles of subcontractors, ICG and Learning Forward (page 22). The project leads from each of the subcontracted organizations have ample experience to fulfill their outlined role as partners in this work.

Weaknesses:

The management plan does not clearly define the role of scaling for the school coaches. Additional details on how the coaches will influence and inform teachers other than ELA teachers are needed. It is not clear if one of the partners is responsible for this level of work.

Reader's Score: 8

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

Strengths:

Citations are provided for assumptions (page 23) on projected student outcomes including attending college.

Learning Forward will provide complementary membership to coaches and teachers involved in this project (letters of support). This will provide districts with a resource focused on professional learning over the course of this study.

Weaknesses:

Additional details are needed on the assumptions used to calculate the \$91 cost per student (page 23) associated with this project.

The amount of funds allocated to IGC to training coaches is \$1,032,047 of the \$7,999,777 budget (approximately 12% of the budget). These costs seem unrealistic to train over 40 coaches across 11 districts over four years. Additional details on the costs of training sessions are needed.

The budget narrative presents some inconsistencies with the number of teachers receiving stipends and incentives from the narrative.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Sub

Strengths:

The work is aligned to the mission of the partners and will continue to be a major piece of their work (page 23). The findings from this study will influence and direct future work of the partners, resulting in continued training for future teachers.

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicates that school coaches will have received intensive support and training leaving them with the skills necessary to continue coaching with efficacy (page 24). Additional details on the districts ongoing commitment to scale including the expansion of coaching to teachers outside of ELA is needed.

Beyond seeking foundation support to continue this project, (page 24) the applicant did not present a reasonable approach to sustainability.

Reader's Score: 3

- 4. (4) 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.**

Strengths:

Appendix I.3 outlines key responsibilities over the course of the grant period. The matrix indicates partner leads for all strategies associated with the project and the anticipated timeline for the work to happen.

Weaknesses:

The timeline presented does not allow for additional refinements to the model beyond year 2. Having one year of extensive development and refinement of an intervention to be fully tested over the next three years is not realistic.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).**

Strengths:

The inclusion of a blocked cluster RCT is an appropriate and approved methodology for this work (page 26).

The applicant includes appropriate exploratory and confirmatory research questions to guide the structure of the research design (page 25), with questions directly related to student behaviors (as part of an SEL focus).

Sub

Weaknesses:

List of schools in Appendix I lists 77 schools that meet the project description. The full study calls for 80 schools. Details on how additional schools (either from other districts or that are not designated as school wide Title 1 schools) will be considered are needed.

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

Details about ELA teachers in the control and treatment groups are thorough and well defined (page 26-27).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

Strengths:

The mechanism to obtain and code baseline data using a valid and reliable measure is clearly presented (page 28-29). The applicant proposes using already established assessments to measure outcomes.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:17 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	7
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	23
Sub Total	35	30
Scaling		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Scaling	20	17
Sub Total	20	17
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	25	23
Sub Total	25	23
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	20	20
Total	100	90

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 7

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

This project articulates the importance of teacher effectiveness in general, its necessity for underperforming populations, and the specific contributions (and challenges) of writing proficiency. Writing proficiency is effectively linked to important academic, emotional, and life skills.

Weaknesses:

Because the proposal notes that "some teacher professional learning programs have an impact" (e26), noting something about the qualities of those programs, and their limits, would help make case for why coaching (and this particular coaching modality) is a preferable approach. Noting that some programs do not have an impact, and some do, is not enough.

Similarly, the claim that districts "typically train coaches on general techniques for coaching" rather than "a specific approach" (e26) elides the many specific and different kinds of coaching models (e.g. "transformational coaching") that are used. It would be helpful to be specific about how this coaching approach differs from what is in place currently.

The proposal does not indicate why the targeted grade bands are a promising target for coaching services.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**

Strengths:

The proposal includes extended and very specific information on the proposed measures. Strategies (goals), outcome and measures are all logically aligned and measurable.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

This project is based upon priorities of district partners and includes flexibility for teachers to make some decisions about what they would like to learn through coaching. This is justified by the principles of adult learning and also linked to a goal that is "student-focused" (e31). Thus, this approach is intended to respond to needs of both teachers and students. Elements of the coaching approach are to draw upon practices that are evidence based and also accommodate local culture and requirements. The alignment of these approaches is promising for meeting perceived needs in an effective way.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

The proposal identifies refinements that can contribute to better processes for supporting coaching at scale and help teachers make effective use of evidence-based practices.

Weaknesses:

The question of how coaching can motivate professional learning appears to be established already from prior work; it is not clear how this research is extending that work, though it is applying it.

Reader's Score: 3

4. **(4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Sub

Strengths:

The project builds upon effective PL practices (e.g., spacing learning, e37) and takes advantage of communications and media technology to provide and organize a framework for learning. The project proposes to pay explicit attention to costs as the intervention is refined. The model has a hierarchical structure of expertise that allows the work to be aligned and supported.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The proposal identifies a theory about what is required for effective coaching (e.g., training and reinforcing training) and tools that can help coaching succeed at scale. These tools take advantage of communications technology and checks on implementation and quality at multiple levels. It includes initial training using both remote and in-person learning; remote review of coaching practices and conferences between "coaching champions" and coaches; and remote meetings of groups of coaches hosted by coaching champions; and remote review of coaching champion work.

This project also includes ongoing fidelity monitoring of coaching activities.

Weaknesses:

The barriers to scaling identified in this section (coaching capacity/fidelity, and limited time, e38) differ somewhat from those identified in the front matter (market saturation with coaching models, fidelity, e27).

It is not evident how new the "Scaling Scaffolds" are to support effective coaching, but many of these practices appear to have been employed recently. It would have been helpful to understand how successful these strategies have been thus far as responses to prior barriers.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Sub

Strengths:

The project proposes to draw upon resources from each of the key partners to disseminate materials to the gamut of practitioner, policymaker, and research audiences.

Weaknesses:

Three conference presentations a year seems unlikely starting in the second year. Identifying the trade journals by name was helpful, and identifying possible peer reviewed journals would also be helpful.

Reader's Score: 9

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The key partners for this work are extensively qualified and experienced providing their respective contributions. This project does not seem likely to create any novel management challenges.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

The proposal notes the long-term benefits of increasing proficiency in writing; the elements for supporting reading proficiency are research-based; and the infrastructure for coaching explicitly offers opportunities for coaches to gain accreditation and continue supporting this work. The project is expected to impact 45,000 students.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Sub

Strengths:

A key purpose of this project is to refine tools to help coaches be more effective and efficient, potentially lowering the average cost of providing coaching services.

Weaknesses:

Coaching is expensive, and it is not clear how much the infrastructure that makes it possible for coaching to go to scale will also make coaching more affordable. The project is, appropriately, concerned with high quality, and high quality is often dear. It would be helpful to understand what the current cost structures are for this work.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) **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.**

Strengths:

The individuals and organizations responsible for this work are qualified, and the responsibilities, timelines and milestones are detailed and reasonable.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).**

Strengths:

The data collection and analytic plan cites specific challenges to WWC consideration (e.g., joiners) and how this study will avoid them.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) **The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.**

Sub

Strengths:

This section is exemplary for its detail in components, mediators, moderators, and outcomes.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.**

Strengths:

This study relies upon measures and methods that will directly answer the identified research questions.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:17 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:33 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	22
Sub Total	35	30
Scaling		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Scaling	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	25	22
Sub Total	25	22
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	20	20
Total	100	90

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant addresses the need for instructional coaches to help improve teacher effectiveness and the importance of the training that the coaches receive and their level of expertise (pg. e25).

Weaknesses:

The applicant could provide more details about the coaching modality to clarify how outcomes will be met.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 22

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

Objectives, goals and strategies are aligned and supported by appropriate activities. (pgs. e35 – e36).

Sub

Weaknesses:

Objectives are listed but are not time specific (pg. e35). The applicant could provide more details about the coaching modality to clarify how outcomes will be met.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The plans addresses the need for additional writing support in middle schoolers and presents a progressive 3-year growth plan for individual participating schools and their staff (pg. e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

The project will add three lines of inquiry to the field of instructional coaching and has activities to support improvements in the quality of instruction, student outcomes and student achievement (pg. e32).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Strengths:

The applicant includes a model for ensuring that the coaches are being productive in their assigned roles and suggests strategies to meet this goal – leveraging technology and peer learning activities and collecting data for program improvement (pg. e37).

Weaknesses:

The applicant could provide more information on how productivity will be improved.

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

Barriers addressed – buy-in of the coaching program and the coaches implementing their programs with fidelity (pg. e27 and e 38) Coaching and monitoring of learning models are suggested to improve performance across the implementation of the CWI model.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The proposal lists several mechanisms to disseminate the project learning – peer-reviewed journals, video testimonials, methods to incorporate programs and the use of an already proven Learning Forward model (pg. e 40).

Weaknesses:

Dissemination methods require more time measurements.

Reader's Score: 8

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 22

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Sub

Strengths:

The project will begin with instructional coaches who are already employed with the schools and provide training and other professional development for them throughout the project. This strategy of internal personnel growth is cost efficient and builds staff capacity. (pg. e29) The personnel listed are industry leaders in addition to the external partners (pgs. e43 – 44).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The reasonability of the cost plan is evident in proposal, specifically the cost per child (pg. e23).

Weaknesses:

Reasonability of cost plan mentioned but without specific details to measure the success of this program, it seems mostly qualitative.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

: Continuation of the work is planned through the school district partners and letters of support are evident (pgs. e47).

Weaknesses:

Sustainability seems highly reliable on the use of contractual external partners – ICG (pg. e47) and not much else listed to support how the project can stand alone should/when not contract end.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) 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.

Strengths:

Management plan includes specific responsibilities for participants aligned with strategies needed to ensure completion and success of project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).

Strengths:

The applicant presents a comprehensive project evaluation plan including WWC evidence standards alignment, measurable outcomes, and timeline (pgs. e48 – e49).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

Measurements for successful implementation are present (pg. e50).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

Strengths:

The improvement of student writing and teacher instruction are noted as markers for collecting data for program evaluation and ensuring getting desired outcomes (pg. e51).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:33 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:42 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	21
Sub Total	35	29
Scaling		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Scaling	20	17
Sub Total	20	17
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
Resources and Quality of Management Plan		
1. Resources and Management	25	21
Sub Total	25	21
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	20	20
Total	100	87

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: American Institutes for Research (S411B200018)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

High leverage (through coaches) and focused on a specific need and needy population. Focuses on how to make instructional coaches, specifically with writing in 8th grade with populations that score proficient at 12,11 and 14%. This could add important data to an intervention instructional coaching, that has only one WWC report.

Weaknesses:

: More detail on the coaching intervention could have strengthened this study. This is focused on a needy population, but does not focus on SEL.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 21

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

Number of coaches and training sessions is outlined.

Sub

Weaknesses:

There are not specific goals for quality of coaching to teachers other than “objective feedback”. They are collecting a lot of qualitative data, but do not define a quantitative goal.

Reader's Score: 8

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

Focuses on training already established coaches in these schools.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

Program starts in 6th grade and phases in a grade for two more years allowing the program to learn as well as 6th graders will see similar teaching of writing in 7th grade.

Weaknesses:

Coaching has been a proven intervention this is not a significant addition.

Reader's Score: 3

4. **(4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Strengths:

Focusing on training the coaches allows an ecosystem of expertise to be created. Many of the reporting aspects and interactions will be conducted online (p. 14).

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

1. **The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following**

factors:

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

Fidelity of coaching (as a barrier) is monitored by coaching champions through evaluation of work. Coaching groups (via web conferences) allow coaches to share solutions. Coaches are experienced (three years) with ICG.

Weaknesses:

This is something that they are already doing but it would be helpful to see if they were able to identify learnings and how they impact the barriers.

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

Six research products and six presentations are listed as performance measures on the grant app form. Quarterly newsletter to participants and 4 meetings.

Weaknesses:

Specific journals and conferences are not listed.

Reader's Score: 8

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 21

Sub

1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Sub

Strengths:

Coaching champions are experienced. AIR is experienced in managing projects and ICG is the group that created the program and has worked with 100,000 coaches

Weaknesses:

Unknown how receptive the coaches will be and how they will implement the program.

Reader's Score: 9

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

Strengths:

Focus on instructional coaches keeps costs reasonable at \$91/student.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

Coaches in the districts will have been trained and can continue on their own.

Weaknesses:

Coaching is expensive to maintain. The schedule is a best-case scenario and may not have allowances for resistance to the training.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) 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.

Strengths:

Three-year phased approach should be achievable.

Weaknesses:

There is only one year of refinement.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).**

Strengths:

Separate student impact cohorts from non-student impact cohorts for comparison.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.**

Strengths:

8 RQ's that fit with the objectives and try to identify moderating influences of coaches, teachers, students and schools.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.**

Strengths:

Measurements for teacher effectiveness using videos and CLASS-S domain scores. Measurements for student outcomes are self-regulation and student engagement (from CLASS-S). Student writing proficiency will be based on ACT Aspire writing test (but only on the main cohort) and will also compare ELA achievement on all cohorts in all years.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:42 AM

