

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/22/2020 12:51 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	35	35
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	20
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science</b>		
1. CPP1	3	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	3	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development</b>		
1. CPP2	2	1
<b>Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment</b>		
1. CPP3	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	6
<b>Total</b>	110	109

# Technical Review Form

Panel #9 - SEED - 9: 84.423A

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

Applicant: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

## Questions

### 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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

### Strengths:

1) The applicant is proposing to implement a two-year cohort-based job-embedded evidence-based professional development program to build and accelerate the leadership capacity of 150 participating school leaders across 95 schools located in six LEAs. Participants will be provided with virtual professional development, quarterly on-site coaching, and quarterly networking opportunities via virtual communities of practice. Successful participants will earn a micro-credential. The project's overarching goal is to foster the ability of the leaders to increase the quality and equity of access to science, technology, engineering and math learning opportunities and social emotional learning within each of their schools. The project is unique in that it brings together two national non-profit organizations specializing in leadership development and professional development with a university and school district partners. The participating principals will benefit from training, professional coaching services, and shared learning. (pages e23-e24)

2) The proposed program is a well-designed, intensive two-year cohort-based program where school leader teams will form to participate in the program as a team. There will be quarterly professional development sessions equaling 120 hours. This will be followed by a combination of virtual on-line and in-person, on-site coaching services and a virtual professional learning community component. The professional development will be rooted in and intentionally designed to meet the identified local needs of the participating school. Participants will attend two in-person events with specialized content training at the initial kick-off meeting for the project and at the NIET Annual Conference. In the second year, participants will meet quarterly with their communities of practice to share ongoing challenges and progress. Sixty-four of the professional development hours will be led by NIET on proven practices in leadership. The professional communities of practices topics and discussions will align and respond to the participants' school needs with evidence-based professional development. Teachers will learn how to facilitate the utilization of enhanced STEM and social emotional learning content with students. (page e29)

3) The applicant effectively documents the needs of the participating schools. The 95 schools include approximately 58,385 students, of which, 56% live in poverty. Further, they report that the experience levels of the school leaders in the participating schools vary, ranging in years of experience of four to twenty years for principals and two to eighteen years for assistant principals. Some of the partner LEAs are expecting some of their veteran leaders to retire soon, creating a

further need for trained leaders to be ready. The applicant also reports that few of the participating LEAs have indicated that their school leaders participate in organized networking outside of their district and rarely attend conferences off-site, thereby, limiting their exposure to professional communities of peers and/or current research and knowledge for leadership or teaching practice. (page e37-e40) The proposed training is designed to change this and create local and regional communities of practice where the leaders can share ideas and learn from each other.

4) The program design inherently fosters opportunities for embedding the newly developed curriculum, programming ideas and leadership practices as participants will be engaged in cohort work that is site specific for changing practice and curriculum. The project encourages participant reflection and shared problem-solving through the communities of practice with network peers. Each LEA will also have a District Leader who will shadow the NIET Leadership Coaches during the on-site visits to learn evidenced-based practices in coaching school leaders for continued follow up after the grant period. This ensures transfer of knowledge to practice. Further, to keep the momentum going, the LEAs will have ongoing access to leadership training modules to use with future school leaders after the grant period. (page e38)

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) No weaknesses noted.
- 2) No weaknesses noted.
- 3) No weaknesses noted.
- 4) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 35**

**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 factors:**

- (1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

**Strengths:**

- 1) The proposed project will include up to 95 schools across six LEAs, impacting approximately 58,385 students. The project is designed to bring a school leadership team cohort together to learn tighter and effect change in their school. The training and coaching will result in improvements in educator quality and retention, improved school climate and student achievement. An added benefit to the program design is that the participants will be involved in professional networking with peers outside of their own schools through structured statewide community of practice. If implemented well, the project will transform instruction and culture for the 95 participating schools. It will create a model that can be replicated for schools nationwide. (pages e39-e40)
- 2) In an effort to ensure that the proposed project contributes to theories of school leadership, the applicant proposes to engage in a rigorous quasi-experimental study of their program and its implementation. The project evaluation is designed to meet the What Works Clearinghouse Standards with reservations on the efficacy of a cohort-based principal leadership network. They will use rigorous methods to create well-matched samples of non-participants of peer school leaders for statistical comparison. (page e44) Further, the project will contribute to practice in the field of study by providing evidence-based professional development to increase school leaders' skills and knowledge in STEM Computer Science

and Social Emotional Learning. This is enabling the participants to make changes in their own schools. Distributed days of on-site support and coaching will ensure that there is a transfer of knowledge to practice for the participants. The idea is to train multiple school leaders from the same school and over the same district to create a pipeline of leadership talent that has a culture of shared leadership in the schools. (page e45)

3) The applicant assures that project information and study findings will be shared broadly at the local, state and national level. They will conduct in-person presentations at academic conferences and will publish findings in academic journals and other online and print media. There will be an Advisory Board formed to provide oversight and support to the program. Together, with the applicant's Communications team, information about the partner LEAs will be shared through local newspaper and media. At the state level, information about project implementation and findings will be shared with other districts and community stakeholders through presentations. And finally, the applicant commits to publishing research briefs, reports and newsletters which will be posted on their website and publicized in social media. (pages e45-e46)

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) No weaknesses noted.
- 2) No weaknesses noted.
- 3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

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

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

**(2) 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.**

**(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

1) The applicant's goals and anticipated outcomes are clearly linked with specific and measurable performance measures. The applicant describes how their goals will be achieved through specific activities and tasks and include the performance measures that show the data that will be used to assess the quality of program implementation and outcomes achievement. For example, Goal # 1 seeks to create new and sustainable Principal Leadership Networks for 150 school leaders in underserved communities. The performance measures focus on the number and demographics of the school leaders that participate; the percentage of participants who participate in each of the program activities and the number; frequency and topics of the communities of practice sessions. (pages e47-e48, 183-e184)

2) The applicant's management plan is well-articulated and includes clear descriptions of the experience and expertise and the role and responsibilities of each of the key personnel. The Project Directors has experience managing federally funded projects and in advancing school leadership teams and student achievement. She is complemented by highly

experienced team members, whose general expertise is listed, demonstrating a strong project leadership team. The applicant includes a copy of their project Logic Model that illustrates their project plan well. (page e165)

3) The applicant provides a clear plan for ensuring ongoing project discussions of progress and for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement. The Project Director will hold monthly meetings with the District Leads from the participating cohorts, the Principal Investigator and the Leadership Coaches to ensure program implementation fidelity. The Leadership Coaches will collaborate with the District Leads, deliver training, provide on-site leadership coaching support to school leaders. Additionally, the evaluation team will meet quarterly with the Project Director to provide updates and to discuss challenges. ( pages e50-e51)

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) No weaknesses noted.
- 2) No weaknesses noted.
- 3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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:**

**(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.**

**(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible**

**Strengths:**

1) The applicant's evaluation plan includes a clear intent to conduct a rigorous quasi-experimental study of the project and its implementation process. The project evaluation is designed to meet the What Works Clearinghouse Standards with reservations on the efficacy of a cohort-based principal leadership network. They will use rigorous methods to create well-matched samples of non-participants of peer school leaders for statistical comparison. (page e44) They will be measuring educator retention and student achievement, the two outcomes that prior research has indicated are associated with improved school leadership practices. The project Leadership Coaches and District Leaders will annually evaluate the project participants on four PADEPP standards that specifically align with the project's Principal Leadership Series – Instructional Leadership, Climate, Staff Development, and Principal's Professional Development – during the two intervention years as a way to assess improvement in leadership capacity.(page e53-e54)

2) The proposed evaluation plan includes strategies for provide ongoing performance feedback and allowing for periodic assessment of project progress to achieving their intended outcomes. The applicant will work with project partners to establish fidelity of implementation indicators and benchmarks for the key components of the program. They will develop a data system to track project progress and to provide relevant data to the project team. The evaluation will include a range of objective performance measures that are related to the project goals, objectives and outcomes that will be reported on, analyzed, and used for decision-making. (page e58- e59)

3) The proposed evaluation plan is designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data will come from the LEAs hiring records, the school district website and surveys. Qualitative data will come from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with network school leaders and teachers. (page e59) Further, the applicant describes three research questions that will be answered by the evaluation that will include the analysis of data and objective performance measures. For example, the first research question focuses on the impact of leadership networking program upon the retention of the school leaders. To examine the impact of the program, the applicant will match samples of school leaders using propensity scoring matching to equate the school characteristics at the pre-intervention year. The evaluation team will collect data on school leader retention, their characteristics and the school characteristics. The outcome data for cohorts one and two will be included in the final project report, but the third cohort will still be ongoing and therefore will not be included. (page e54)

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) No weaknesses noted.
- 2) No weaknesses noted.
- 3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science**

- 1. **Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant's proposed project includes the integration of training and education around curriculum implementation strategies for enhanced focusing on STEM. The school leaders will receive specialized training and individualized coaching to increase the instructional effectiveness of the STEM educators in their schools. The first training, facilitated by the project leadership team, will focus on Building Instructional Coherence and will provide an enhanced understanding of the state's computer science standards which align with national science, math and English/language arts instruction. Their second training will focus on implementing and enhancing computer science opportunities for all students. The project Leadership Coaches will provide participants with individualized coaching to support the school leaders as they make efforts to improve the quality of STEM instruction in their schools. (page e26-e27)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development**

1. **Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**

- (i) Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
- (ii) Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
- (iii) Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
- (iv) Develop problem-solving skills.**
- (v) Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant proposes a reasonable plan for meeting the criteria for Competitive Preference Priority # 2. They plan to provide evidence-based professional development to the school leaders around the topic of social emotional learning and will provide the participants with strategies and methods for implementing and integrating social emotional learning instruction in their schools. The training is designed to increase the leader's knowledge and skills in inclusion instruction so that all students benefit from the curriculum and strategies. (page e26)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant's training plan that is a part of their approach to addressing Competitive Preference Priority #2 is incomplete and does not clearly explain what the training will include or how it addresses the components of the priority. (page e26)

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment**

1. **Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:**

**(a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—**

- (i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and**
- (ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a clear list of the involved QOZs on page e167 and identifies the town/communities covered by that census tract. The project is intentionally designed to provide training and support for school leaders in high need communities. Five of the six participating LEAs have schools located with QOZs and the school leaders in those schools will have the opportunity to collaborate with participants both inside and outside the zones, thereby, opening up a network of shared knowledge and experience. (page e27)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

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Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	35	35
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	20
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science</b>		
1. CPP1	3	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	3	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development</b>		
1. CPP2	2	1
<b>Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment</b>		
1. CPP3	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	6
<b>Total</b>	110	109

# Technical Review Form

Panel #9 - SEED - 9: 84.423A

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

Applicant: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

## Questions

### 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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

### Strengths:

1. The applicant presents a well-developed project that represents an exceptional approach to the priority as demonstrated by the collaboration of NIET and BranchED in the development of the project design. For example, the leveraging of resources between these two entities will address the professional development needs of school leaders by creating and communicating a culture of equity, leading instructional coherence, building shared instructional leadership and sustaining reflective practice through continuous improvement and coaching. The proposed approach will also provide content specific training for creating equitable opportunities in STEM education and training in social and emotional learning that integrates culturally relevant pedagogy for all students (e20-26).

2. The applicant proposes training or professional development that is of sufficient quality, intensity and duration to lead improvements in practice as evidenced by the collaboration of NIET and BranchED. The proposed two-year cohort programs include virtual and in-person training such as two in-person events with specialized content training at the annual NIET conference. Further, the applicant proposes to provide 120 hours of evidence-based professional development to support effective school leaders (e28).

3. The applicant presents a project design based on previously developed evidence-based training materials and innovative new practices. The applicant illustrates the project design with a logic model that aligns activities with proposes short term and long term goals. For example, the applicant proposes to create principal leadership for 150 school leaders by providing school leaders the opportunity to engage in quarterly virtual communities of practice for two years. The effects of these activities will produce an increased capacity of school leaders and improve the average teacher and school leader retention rates in participating districts. These outcomes will address the need of increasing the leadership skills of school leaders in underserved communities in South Carolina (e36-38, e49, e164).

4. The applicant presents a reasonable plan for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into ongoing work beyond the grant as demonstrated by the training of a District Lead member who will shadow NIET Leadership Coaches to follow-up with leaders after the grant period. In addition, the partner LEAs will have ongoing access to the leadership training modules to use with future leaders. Further, the applicant will encourage participation from the principal

and an additional leader to account for mortality (e38-39).

**Weaknesses:**

1. There are no weaknesses.
2. There are no weaknesses.
3. There are no weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 35**

**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 factors:**

- (1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

**Strengths:**

1. The proposed importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project are clearly described. For example, the proposed project will result in leadership capacity of school leaders targeting underserved communities as evidenced by the recruitment of the principal and an additional leader at the same school and the census tracts of the qualified opportunity zones. Further, the proposed project aims to transform instruction and culture for 95 partnering schools and 58,385 students, of which of over 56% are in poverty (e40-44).
2. The applicant presents a reasonable rationale for the potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field. For example, the applicant proposes to build a culture of shared leadership within schools through the training of multiple school leaders at the same school and on-site support and coaching to ensure the transfer of knowledge to practice.
3. The applicant sufficiently describes the extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies as demonstrated by the sharing of project findings at the local, state and national level through in-person presentations, academic conferences and journals, and print and online media (e45). Specifically, the applicant proposes to partner with LEAs to establish quarterly communications to monitor progress, share findings with district and community stakeholders by presentations in partnership with the University of South Carolina and the South Carolina Department of Education and the annual NIET National Conference (e46).

**Weaknesses:**

1. There are no weaknesses.
2. There are no weaknesses.
3. There are no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

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

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

#### Strengths:

1. The applicant adequately describes the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the project are clearly specified and measurable. The applicant presented performance measures related to the three goals of the proposed project. For example, the applicant proposes measure Goal 1: Create new, sustainable Principal Leadership Networks for 150 school leaders serving in underserved communities over the duration of the grant, will be assessed by performance measures of the percentage of participants who participate in each program activity such as virtual trainings, on-site and communities of practice (CoP) cohort (e30-31).

2. The applicant presents an adequate management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget. For example, the applicant identifies the Project Director as the staff member who will oversee progress of grant implementation, with the roles and responsibilities of each member of the project team clearly defined. Further, the applicant provides performance measures and outcomes, along with benchmarks for the proposed goals to be achieved by the project (e47,48).

3. The applicant presents a detailed plan for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. For example, the Project Director will manage all aspects of continuous improvement which includes measures such as the Project Director will conduct monthly meetings with District Leads from participating cohorts, NIET's Principal Investigator, and NIET Leadership Coaches. Additionally, the Project Director will meet with the evaluation team quarterly, along with preparing monthly reports on the frequency and types of support delivered to school leaders and District Leads (e50).

#### Weaknesses:

1. There are no weaknesses.

2. There are no weaknesses.

3. There are no weaknesses.

**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:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible

**Strengths:**

1. The proposed detailed evaluation plan will meet the WWC standards with reservations regarding the efficacy of a cohort-based principal leadership network. Further the applicant proposes to measure the extent to which the program design of combining virtual and in-person training, coaching and networking will improve leadership practice (e18). Additionally, the proposed methods of evaluation will meet WWC standards with reservations as measured by educator retention and student achievement (e52).

2. The proposed methods of evaluations are adequate to provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. In addition, the quality of intervention will be assessed and continually improved through the examination of program artifacts such as training materials and assessments (e57-59).

3. The applicant will utilize quantitative and qualitative data during the formative evaluation. For example, the proposed methods of evaluation will include quantitative data from LEA's hiring records, the South Carolina Department of Education website from publicly available data and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with network school leaders and teachers administered by NIET. (e60-62)

**Weaknesses:**

1. There are no weaknesses.

2. There are no weaknesses.

3. There are no weaknesses.

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science**

1. Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing

**the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant proposes to improve student achievement in STEM, specifically computer science, through training focused on Building Instructional Coherence. The proposed training will be conducted by NIET, University of South Carolina faculty and individualized coaching sessions by NIET Leadership Coaches. The applicant proposes to combine evidenced-based professional development activities with on-site coaching as a means of providing support for leaders.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development**

**1. Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**

- (i) Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
- (ii) Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
- (iii) Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
- (iv) Develop problem-solving skills.**
- (v) Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant proposes to provide leaders with SEL training and ongoing support for the implementation and integration of SEL instruction at their schools. The proposed training Creating and Communicating a Culture of Equity will be conducted by NIET and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy will be led by BranchED, which will allow leaders the opportunity for networking in a facilitated on-going virtual community of practice (e26).

**Weaknesses:**

It is unclear how the proposed trainings will address the components of this criterion. It is also unclear what components in the proposed trainings for leaders will prepare students in areas such as developing positive personal relationships with others or developing self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.

**Reader's Score: 1**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment**

**1. Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:**

**(a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—**

**(i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and**

**(ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).**

**Strengths:**

The applicant clearly describes the areas that will benefit from this project. For example, the applicant proposes to impact 58,385 students, attending 95 schools across six partnering local education agencies (LEAs). Further, five of the six partnering LEAs and twelve schools are located within qualified opportunity zones (e27). The proposed project design will allow leaders working with QOZs to network and build a network of shared knowledge with leaders outside of QOZs.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses.

**Reader's Score:**     **5**

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**Status:**           Submitted

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Status: Submitted

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	35	35
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	20
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science</b>		
1. CPP1	3	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	3	3
<b>Competitive Preference Priority</b>		
<b>Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development</b>		
1. CPP2	2	1
<b>Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment</b>		
1. CPP3	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	6
<b>Total</b>	110	109

# Technical Review Form

Panel #9 - SEED - 9: 84.423A

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

Applicant: National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (S423A200043)

## Questions

### 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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

### Strengths:

(1) The applicant has effectively discussed the exceptional approach to Absolute Priority 2 of developing leadership skills for supporting effective principals and other school leaders through the South Carolina Principal Leadership Network (SCPLN). On pages e23-e27, the applicant has discussed the focus of the project of creating a culture of equity, leading instructional coherence, building shared instructional leadership, and sustaining reflective practice. The uniqueness of the project design is the collaboration of three partners, the applicant, the university of South Caroline and BranchEd with each focusing on specific aspects. The applicant has cited research that underlines the top school improvement variables: quality of teachers and quality of principals. The strength of the project design is developing impactful leadership capacities with evidence-based professional development to enhance instructional leadership, create a sustainable model for job-embedded professional development and cultivate a culture of inclusion and advancement for all students (page e25).

(2) The applicant has adequately described and demonstrated that the project activities are of high quality, intense and effective duration (pages e27-e36). The applicant will implement three cohorts of 5 participants each with intense professional development in year one, and the second year will meet with their co-principal to share ongoing challenges. The cohort model also includes partnership models. The applicant has described each of the project goals with the level of interventions. For example for goal 1, the participants will be provided 120 hours or evidence-based professional development, and for goal # 2, the participants will be provided Principal Leadership Series with eight days of virtual high-quality professional development focusing on critical attributes such as leading instructional coherence, and building shared instructional leadership (pages e32-e33). The training also includes transformative learning theory. Table 1 clearly lays out the schedule to ensure proper duration, intensity and spaced professional development for the participants.

(3) The applicant has provided a satisfactory discussion of the identified needs and the methods of addressing them through the project (pages e36-e38). On page e41, the applicant has described the partnering LEA challenges such as school leader and teacher turnover, chronic absenteeism and low student achievement. For example, in some of the schools, a majority of the principals have been at the school for less than five years. Similarly, on page e37, the applicant has stipulated how few school leaders participate in organized networking outside their district. The project seeks to

address these issues by providing school leaders a supportive network, individual coaching, helping them identify and address issues of equity and create strategies to support students. By focusing on STEM and SEL, the project also seeks to build the school leadership capacity.

(4) The applicant has provided an adequate discussion of project sustainability. The project design includes a district lead who will shadow the project coaches to learning the practice and continue providing coaching after the grant period. Partnering LEAs will also have an ongoing access to the leadership training modules. The strength of the project is school capacity building and creating organized networking support to carry on professional training and support. The project encourages principal and an additional leader from the participant school to get exposed to the program and maintain the activities after the grant ends.

**Weaknesses:**

(1), (2), (3) & (4) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 35**

**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 factors:**

- (1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

**Strengths:**

(1) The applicant has adequately discussed the magnitude of the project impact in the context of the project goals (pages e39-e44). The applicant has stipulated that the project will transform instruction and culture for the 95 partnering schools and 58,385 students. The project will also develop a training model that can support school leaders and LEAs across the nation. The project impact includes more stable schools with less educator turnover, improved instruction and school culture, and increased student achievement. For example, the applicant has cited research support that demonstrates that teacher leadership development is a key mediating mechanism that will lead to student achievement. The project deliverable is creating a model that can be employed in collaboration with any consortium of school leaders with replicable trainings and support procedures.

(2) The applicant has effectively discussed the potential contribution to the development and advancement of knowledge in the field (pages e44-e45). The applicant will study and evaluate the project using rigorous methods that meets WWC standards. The project will research on the efficacy of a cohort-based principal leadership network. The project analyses will reveal the efficacy and the capability of implementing a leadership professional development that combined virtual and in-person training, coaching and networking and their impact on educator retention and student achievement. The applicant specifically seeks to research on the strategies of coaching and collaborative learning teams. Other elements of the project design that will contribute to the theory and practice in the field include training elements on SEL and STEM for school leaders, and the iterative cohort design.

(3) The applicant has strong plan to disseminate project findings and information both internally and externally (pages e45-e46). The applicant has an effective systemic experience of disseminating information. At the local level, the applicant and partners will communicate quarterly to monitor progress and annually convene an Advisory Board. The applicant

communications team will work with partnering LEAs to promote schools' success in local newspapers and media, while at the state levels the information will be shared with the community stakeholders. At the national level, the project information will be shared at the NIEL national conference and professional research conferences. Moreover, the project findings are planned to be disseminated via publications such as research briefs, reports and newsletters.

**Weaknesses:**

(1), (2) & (3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

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

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

**(2) 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.**

**(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

(1) The applicant has adequately discussed the project goals and objectives on pages e47-e48. The three broad goals are operationalized in project outcomes. For example, goal # 3 of building the knowledge of school leaders are aligned to performance measures such as number of hours of STEM training model, percentage of participants receiving university of South Carolina micro-credentials and percentage of participants reporting increased confidence in their ability to lead and strengthen programs. The applicant also has clear project outcomes (logic model, page e444). For example, the applicant seeks to have at least 80 of network school leaders to report increased ability to lead and strengthen STEM programs. The applicant project goals, objectives and outcome are thus well developed.

(2) The applicant has a clear blueprint to implement the project (pages e48-e51). Table 3 provides a list of project key personnel along with their involvement in the project. For example, Dr. Ann Shaw will be the executive director of the project, while BrachEd will provide subject matter experts. Also, the University of South Carolina will provide research and evaluation support along with STEM faculty experts. In Table 1 on pages e30-e31, the applicant has provided clear project objectives along with milestones and project staff responsible. For example, for goal # 1, the milestone would identify participating school leaders by October of the first year and would be the responsibility of participating LEAs. The timebound project plan demonstrates that the applicant can achieve the project goals and objectives with sufficient time and effort devoted by the staff.

(3) The applicant has discussed a strong feedback mechanism (page e51). The applicant has identified the project director as the person who will be in-charge of feedback and continuous improvement. The project director will conduct monthly meetings with district leads, the PIs, the leadership coaches and partners to ensure implementation fidelity and discuss solutions. The applicant has an effective hierarchy and system of feedback mechanism. For example, while the project director will work with the leadership coaches, the coaches will collaborate and work with district leads to gather feedback. The project director will also provide monthly report to stakeholders. Similarly, the project evaluation team will have quarterly meetings to provide feedback.

**Weaknesses:**

(1), (2) & (3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 20**

**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:**

**(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.**

**(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible**

**Strengths:**

(1) The applicant has proposed a strong evaluation plan (pages e52-e57). The evaluation will be conducted by the applicant Research and Evaluation department using the project logic model. The applicant seeks to use the impact evaluation approach designed to provide evidence of program effectiveness that address the WWC standards. On pages e53-e57, the applicant has provided details on the propensity scoring methods to establish treatment and comparison groups for equivalence. The applicant has described how each research question will be examined in a valid and reliable method. The evaluation design also seeks to control for attrition of participants. In table 4, the applicant has provided a summary of units of measurement and total sample size that enables to establish the project evaluation design as valid and reliable.

(2) The applicant has indicated the use of an effective formative evaluation for period feedback (pages e57-e59). The strength of the formative evaluation is the establishment of fidelity indicators and benchmarks and developing a data system to track program progress. The project will collect data such as timing, frequency, and intervention information continuously. Moreover, the quality of the intervention will be assessed and improved through program artifacts, and qualitative data from surveys, focus groups and interviews with program designers, project staff and participants. The cohort design helps to improve the subsequent cohorts based on lessons learnt from the first cohort. The applicant will use validity and reliability methods and use surveys such as Comprehensive school climate survey. On page e51, the applicant has provided details of regular meetings with the project staff, partners, and the evaluation team to ensure project progress.

(3) The applicant has discussed the use of effective objective project performance measures (page e59). In table 2 on pages e47-e48, the applicant has provided the three main goals and the performance measures associated with the goals. For example, for goal 2, to build instructional leadership, the performance measures seek to collect the data of the frequency, types and total number of hours of virtual leadership training, and percentage of participants who improve their performance and increased confidence through valid instruments. The project will also collect data of the project participants to measure participate attrition. As a part of evaluation, the project will triangulate data to establish both validity and reliability by collecting quantitative and qualitative data through surveys and interviews. On pages e182-e185 the applicant has provided effective performance measures for project objectives to ensure a robust evaluation.

**Weaknesses:**

(1), (2) & (3) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science**

- 1. Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has addressed adequately Competitive Preference Priority 1 (pages e25-e26). The applicant approach to the priority is to provide network participants individualized coaching to increase the instructional effectiveness of STEM educators. The applicant will facilitate training for participants to enhance their understanding of the state computer science standards aligned to traditional STEM. The project coaches will also help the participants to make efforts to improve quality of STEM instruction and create synergy. The strength of the project is the incorporation of the priority in the project logic model and performance indicators.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development**

- 1. Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**

- (i) Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
- (ii) Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
- (iii) Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
- (iv) Develop problem-solving skills.**
- (v) Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has briefly addressed Competitive Preference Priority 2. The program approach to the priority includes clear planned training by the applicant. For example, the project will provide training to focus on creating and communicating a culture of equity and culturally relevant pedagogy. The project participants also collaborate with networked peers in facilitated on-going virtual community to share their implementation experiences.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant has not provided details of how the identified trainings in equity and culturally relevant pedagogy will enable students of the identified LEAs to develop positive non-cognitive skills such as problem-solving, self-regulation and

positive personal relationship with others.

**Reader's Score:** 1

**Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment**

**1. Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:**

**(a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—**

**(i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and**

**(ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).**

**Strengths:**

(i) The applicant has provided the census tract numbers of the QOZ's in in table H.2 in appendix H. The table clearly identified the LEAs with the districts and their corresponding QOZ.

(ii) The applicant has discussed the project elements as integral to address the needs of these identified QOZ's (page e27). The applicant has stipulated that five of the six participating LEAs have schools located within QOZ. The strength of the project is the opportunity for the participants of the QOZ to network within and outside the QOZ. The project seeks to create a comprehensive and integrated project to support effective school leaders and create a professional network to benefit participants from the QOZs.

**Weaknesses:**

(i) & (ii) No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

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