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

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/26/2022 01:10 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)
Reader #1: **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	20
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	25
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	9
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	0
	Sub Total	100	64
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. COVID-19		3	3
	Sub Total	6	6
	Total	106	70

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Early Phase - 1: 84.411C

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

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. **The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)**

   Strengths:

   The proposal will utilize CL360, a scalable, comprehensive, digital English Language Arts ("ELA") open educational resource (OER) blended learning curriculum with aligned PD, assessments, and school district support to reach 80,000 in students in grades 6-12 across four districts (Abstract, p. e-15). The proposal will mostly further develop CL360 from a pilot year whereas the applicant received ED grants and foundation grants and now will better address disparities in the wake of COVID-19 (p.e-16-24). The significance is important as it could reach many more students when made available for free by the applicant. CommonLit has strong brand awareness and exposure, with over 22 million registered teacher and student users which contributes to this project being considered a promising new strategy (p. e-24).

   Weaknesses:

   No weakness noted.

   Reader's Score: 20

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: 25

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

Sub

Strengths:

The proposal presents a conceptual framework with PBL and prior experience with piloting PBL. They are likely to succeed with their proposed services as demonstrated experience and activities were evident. For example, prior experience framework was applied so that students are engaged in project-and problem-based interdisciplinary learning (Logic Model, p. e-97, e-20-21).

Weaknesses:

The applicant states 5 premises in Appendix G (p. e-97) and brochure of product in Appendix E (p. e119) but they do not explicitly state the research framework. The applicant is mostly adding to their own pilot study and does not explicitly explain the underlying theory, prior research, or citations behind the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 6

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The proposed project goals are to optimize CL360 to improve student literacy development especially among underserved students and to evaluate the efficacy of CL360. (p e-26-27) The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are mostly specified and measurable (Logic Model, p. e-97, p. e-26-27, For example, Project Objectives and Performance Measures Information included increases in each objective with percentages and raw numbers provided (e-162-167).

   Weaknesses:

   The goals for achieving all academic outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are not explicitly specified and measurable. For example, the applicant states that 80 percent of pilot teachers implement 80 percent of CL360 lessons marked "Essential" for 1b. This objective lacks specific increases and is therefore not considered measurable (Logic Model, p. e-97, p. e-26-27).

   Reader's Score: 4

3. **(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. (15 points)**

   Strengths:

   The proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. The applicant will target underserved students under poverty, students of color, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. For example, every unit includes translations offered in 37 different languages for remediation. CL360 addresses needs through rigorous and grade-level appropriate, content-rich OER materials with aligned formative assessments delivered through a digital platform that supports blended learning (p. e-27-29).

   Weaknesses:

   No weakness noted.

   Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project.**

In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:

Reader's Score: 9

> Sub

1. **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel is addressed. ███████. ███ CommonLit Director of Instructional Support, will serve as the Project Director, drawing on years of expertise leading large-scale education evaluation efforts. School outreach and coordination will be led by ██████████, CommonLit Director of U.S. Programs, who served in this school liaison role in a large-scale grant with 50 schools and holds a B.A. in Spanish from Princeton University (p. e-29-30, Resumes, e-55-88). The applicant will recruit applicants from diverse backgrounds who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. CommonLit has a track record of hiring and retaining diverse applicants among its leadership and employees (p. e-29).

   Weaknesses:

   The applicant does not provide explicitly stated strategies for recruiting applicants from diverse backgrounds who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

   Reader's Score: 9

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, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

> Sub

1. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   CommonLit has successfully managed two prior federal grants of comparable size, hitting every milestone and outcome on time and within budget. Appendix J indicates a management plan with adequacy to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. For example, the project director's responsibilities clearly include managing several federal grants and project duties (Appendix J p. e-105-118, p. e-31).

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

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 with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

   Strengths:

   Weaknesses:

   Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   Weaknesses:

   Reader's Score:

3. **(3) 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. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   Weaknesses:

Sub

   Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

 1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

   Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
   (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
   (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
   (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
   (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
   (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

   Strengths:

   The proposal addresses many of the allowable CPP 1 services such as a student-centered learning model leveraging technology (a-d) as allowed by the competitive design (p. e-41).

   Weaknesses:

   No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

 1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

   Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

   Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:
   (a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and
   (b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully

meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The proposal addresses both allowable CPP 2 services as allowed by the competitive design to include remote instruction and reengaging students who were impacted by COVID. For example, the project is deploying tools and encouraging practices to re-engage students and strengthen relationships through engaging, culturally relevant assignments featuring authors from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/26/2022 01:10 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	20
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	25
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	8
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	0
	Sub Total	100	63
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. COVID-19		3	3
	Sub Total	6	6
	Total	106	69

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Early Phase - 1: 84.411C

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

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

1. **The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)**

   Strengths:

   CommonLit 360 (CL360) is built upon an existing strategy originally named CommonLit. In 2016, CL360 received a grant from the Department of Education to build a free digital library with supportive technology. Again, in 2018, CL360 received an additional grant from the Department of Education to develop normed formative assessments integrated into every lesson. Between 2018 through 2022, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Robin Hood Foundation, et al developed CL360 into a rigorous, grade-level aligned full-year ELA program (p. e-18).

   The applicant plans to build on CL360 in the following ways: 1) further develop CL360, 2) pilot and refine CL360 to address disparities due to COVID-19, and 3) conduct a three-year randomized controlled trial (e-19).

   Two studies support that this is a promising new strategy. The first study took place in New York middle schools. Students with at least 11 digital lessons realized gains above 0.23 standard deviations. Students in a control group saw literacy declines. The second study took place in in a rural district in Tennessee. Those scores went from among the lowest in the state to among the highest in the state (pp. e-18 – e-19).

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses are identified.

   Reader's Score: 20

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: 25

1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant provides a narrative (pp. e-24 – e-26) and a graphic Logic Model (p. e-97) to support their conceptual framework. In the first column of the Logic Model the applicant provides five premises underlying their conceptual framework. The five premises are all based on research conducted by other researchers. For example, Premise 1 states: Access to high quality, grade level appropriate ELA curriculum (p. e-97). The researchers that contributed to this first premise are: (RAND, 2020) and (TNTP, 2018) (p. e-25). Lastly, the applicant provides an aligned activity to support their framework. For example, Objective 1.1 states: Refine CL360 units for grades 6-10 based on stakeholder feedback to dramatically improve outcomes for underserved students (p. e-97). All combined, these somewhat address the quality of the conceptual framework.

   Weaknesses:

   There is no explicit connection between the cited research and the proposed conceptual framework. It would be useful to provide data from the cited research to demonstrate the success of the research and/or data from the original CommonLit project.

   Reader's Score: 6

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant presents two mostly specific goals and several specified objectives in its Management Plan (pp. e-105 – e-117). For example: Goal 1: Improve CL360 product such that it improves outcomes especially for underserved students and Goal 2: Conduct a randomized control trial (RCT) to measure the effectiveness of CL360 in implementation districts, with complementary survey and qualitative field work (pp. e-105 – e-117).

   The outcomes are mostly specific and measurable. Examples include the following measurable outcomes. Performance Measure 1.3b: Student engagement increases by 30% as measured by user activity logs. Performance Measure 1.4c: Schools show 20% improvement each quarter in terms of proactively reengaging disengaged students during the year (pp. e-109 – e-111).

   Weaknesses:

   Some outcomes do not specify the amount of change anticipated as a result of the intervention which somewhat minimizes the measurability of the proposed outcomes. For example, Performance Measure 2.3a states: 80% of students will show growth from pre to post on CL reading and writing assessments (e-117). Ideally, the amount of growth anticipated will be explicit for each year of the grant.

   Reader's Score: 4

3. **(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. (15 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant demonstrates that CL360 successfully addresses the needs of their target population which is defined as: students experiencing poverty, students of color, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities. CL360 curriculum writers have collected over five thousand surveys from students to better understand their needs

and preferences. The results in unit topics that are of high-interest and relevant to students which will successfully address the needs of their targeted students (e-27).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are identified.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant shares demographic information about CL360. For example, CL360 is led by ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ who is a Latina educator. Also, the board of directors are 57% female and 57% identify as BIPOC, AAPI, or Latinx. They share one hiring strategy of listing the salary range which may attract applicants of color (e-29).

The applicant shares information about key personnel that demonstrates their extensive expertise in their fields and serving underserved students. For example, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ will serve as the Project Director which is an excellent fit as she serves as the CommonLit Director of Instructional Support. Several other CommonLit employees will be joined by ▮▮▮▮▮ who is a professor of Education at Columbia University (pp. e-29 – e-30).

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides no demographic information about the CL360 employees or the school employees. Also, they do not explicitly address how they will encourage applications from potential employees who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented (p. e-29).

Reader's Score: 8

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, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

    Sub

1. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (10 points)**

    Strengths:

    The applicant makes evident that they will accomplish the proposed project on time and within budget as they have successfully managed two comparable grants previously (p. e-31).

    The applicant shares a comprehensive Management Plan (e-105 – e-118) that provides clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. For example, Goal 1 states: Improve CL360 product such that it improves outcomes, especially for underserved students. One of several activities/milestones for this goal is Activity 1.1.3 which states: Improve Tier 2 writing supports, including graphic organizer and peer feedback protocol. Next, the people responsible are: ▇▇▇▇▇▇ (Lead), ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇, and the Curriculum Writing Staff. Lastly, the due date is designated as 07.01.2023 (p. e-105).

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses are identified.

    Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

    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 with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

    Strengths:

    Weaknesses:

    Reader's Score:

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

Sub

   Strengths:

   Weaknesses:

   Reader's Score:

3. **(3) 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. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   Weaknesses:

   Reader's Score:

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

   Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
   (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
   (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
   (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
   (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
   (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

   Strengths:

   The applicant demonstrates that his project will promote equity in student access to educational resources by: 1) (a) creating a project with student-centered learning that leverages technology and universal design for learning (UDL), 2) (b) (c) preparing students for advanced coursework in high school.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

    Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

    Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:
    (a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and
    (b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

    Strengths:

    The applicant addresses (a) by engineering a system of alerts for teachers and administrators about patterns of disengagement and missing assignments, with corresponding training for how to actively re-engage with families (e-42).

    The applicant addresses (b) by providing their students with evidence-based instructional approaches and by providing high quality professional development that support teachers (e-42).

    Weaknesses:

    No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/29/2022 08:41 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)
Reader #3: **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Significance			
1. Significance		20	20
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		30	29
Quality of Project Personnel			
1. Project Personnel		10	9
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		10	10
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		30	0
	Sub Total	100	68
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. COVID-19		3	3
	Sub Total	6	6
	Total	106	74

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)

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:

Reader's Score: 20

   Sub

1. The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies. (20 points)

   Strengths:

CL360 was previously developed and implemented during from 2018 to 2022 as a fully packaged academic program for English Language Arts (ELA) (pp. e-18-20). The initial implementation of the program shows positive outcomes for students. For example, middle school students who completed a minimum of 11 digital lessons gained more academically than what students typically see in one full year of instruction (p. e-19). The proposed project is effectively built on a promising strategy for ELA instruction.

   Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

   Reader's Score: 20

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: 29

   Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. (10 points)

   Strengths:

The applicant describes each component that has contributed to the project design along with appropriate and relevant evidence to support its use. For example, to provide the cultural and technological support for a diverse

population, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are employed. Some elements included are a text-to-voice feature, one-click translation, and diversity in pedagogical materials (pp. e-22-23). The project has five components that combine to create a successful and strong conceptual framework (pp. e20-24).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant has identified two goals for the project. Each goal has a set of clearly specified objectives that include measures and activities shown on pages e-105 through d-117. For example, Goal 1 is: Improve CL360 product such that it improves outcomes, especially for underserved students. Objective 1.2 is: Engineer curriculum and technology to better support learner variability within a blended learning environment. The measure for this objective is: Target Lessons receive a 70-100 (excellent rating) on average Net Promoter Score. All goals and objectives are clearly stated and mostly measurable.

Weaknesses:

At least one of the performance measures (pp. e-105-118) does not include the expected growth so that success can be determined. Performance measure 8a which states that 80 percent of students will show growth from pre to post on CL reading and writing assessments (p. e167) does not state the expected growth for the group. For example, the objective could be written: 80 percent of students will show a minimum of a 20% increase between pre- and post- tests on CL reading and writing assessments.

Reader's Score: 4

3. **(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. (15 points)**

Strengths:

Five thousand surveys were collected from students to gain an understanding of their needs and preferences, including engagement and usefulness rates for each lesson. The project meets the needs of the target population (middle school students) because CCSS aligned curriculum and design will consider information gained from the surveys and include social/emotional support through a variety of structures such as classroom culture-building activities and academic discussion routines (p. e-27). This project has been designed to successfully address the needs of the student target population.

Teacher input was also used during design and includes embedded professional development to build the use of research-backed pedagogical routines in ELA. These include questioning strategies, vocabulary building, and creating an outstanding classroom environment (p. e-28). These inclusions assist the project with meeting the needs of teachers.

The vertical alignment of the curriculum ensures that ELA concepts and standards are included and developed throughout the students' years of use (pp. e-28-29). The applicant notes that this will meet the needs of schools and districts because it can ensure that a rigorous, comprehensive ELA curriculum has been provided to students.

Sub

    Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

    Reader's Score: **15**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: **9**

    Sub

    1. **The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)**

      Strengths:

The proposal shares the current demographic for the board of directors of the organization as well as CommonLit's leader. The applicant states that the organization utilizes best practices to attract and retain underrepresented minorities, citing that job postings list the salary range which is a practice that is shown to attract applicants from underrepresented populations (p. e-29). The applicant has somewhat addressed the employment of persons from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Key personnel for the project have relevant experience for requirements of their positions. For example, the CommonLit Director of Curriculum gained extensive experience evaluating and designing criteria for high-quality instruction materials at EdReports (p. e-30), and her resume shows a variety of other experiences as well as education that offer extensive background to enhance her knowledge and skills (pp. e-71-73). Basic summaries are provided on pages e-29 and e-30, but full resumes are also included in the application and indicate strong experience and the necessary education that will allow them to successfully fulfill their responsibilities.

      Weaknesses:

The applicant lists one strategy for encouraging applications from traditionally underrepresented populations and listing the salary range on job postings (p. e-29). This strategy on its own is not robust enough to show that the project has fully developed its strategy for creating a diverse staff for the project. If all staff is currently employed by CommonLit, then a breakdown of the staff demographics or those working on this project could address its commitment to diversity.

    Reader's Score: **9**

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, the Secretary considers:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (10 points)**

   Strengths:

   Activities for the project are identified in the management plan, are clearly related to their goals and objectives, and have a timeline that successfully supports completion (pp. e-105-118). For example, Goal 1 is: Improve CL360 product such that it improves outcomes, especially for underserved students. One of the activities aligned to the goal is: Refine 30 total grade 6-12 units based on 5,000 prior stakeholder surveys and consultant feedback. This activity will begin on 7/1/2023 with a schedule to complete two units every six weeks. The units will be digitized by 6/30/2025. This information is detailed enough to strongly support the completion of the activity on time and within budget.

   The management plan includes the person ultimately responsible (lead) for the activity as well as those who will participate in its completion. For example, ███████ is responsible for Activity 1.1.3 which is: Improve Tier 2 writing supports, including graphic organizer and peer feedback protocol. ███████ as well as the curriculum writing staff will assist (p. e-105). This information not only defines responsibilities but also shows who is in charge of the activity and other staff who will be included in the work.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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: 0

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 with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

   Strengths:

   N/A

Sub

> **Weaknesses:**

> N/A

> **Reader's Score:** 0

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

> **Strengths:**

> N/A

> **Weaknesses:**

> N/A

> **Reader's Score:** 0

3. **(3) 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. (5 points)**

> **Strengths:**

> N/A

> **Weaknesses:**

> N/A

> **Reader's Score:** 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

   Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
   (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
   (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
   (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
   (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
   (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

The project successfully meets the main criteria for CPP1 because it is the refinement of CL360 using student and expert input to create resources that will be successful with underserved students.

Sub-criteria (a) is met because of the high-quality content and inclusive strategies, and sub-criteria (b) is also met because of the improvement that middle school students will make so that they will be prepared for advanced coursework in high school.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

 1. **Competitive Preference Priority 2:**

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:
(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and
(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The project will use encourage and re-engage all students, including those most affected by COVID-19. Students will be provided high-quality curriculum with universal supports to improve learning loss that is particularly appropriate for underserved students. The applicant successfully shares how the project meets the overarching criteria of CPP2 (p. e-42).

Sub-criteria (a) is adequately met through the use of the surveys which will provide data to enhance CL360 so that students can be re-engaged.

Sub-criteria (b) is adequately met not only through the embedded professional development but also through the implementation of a program that will not contribute to tracking or remedial course needs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/25/2022 04:30 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/07/2022 02:35 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)
Reader #1: **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	27
Total	30	27

Technical Review Form

Panel #8 - EIR Tier 2 - 5: 84.411C

Reader #1:   **********
Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)

Questions

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: 27

   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 with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

   Strengths:

   The applicant has proposed a cluster randomized control trial randomized at the school level. If well implemented, the intervention should meet WWC standards without reservation. Issues of attrition are appropriately addressed. The presented analytic models indicate a level of statistical sophistication.

   The project evaluator has the education, background, and experience to produce a quality evaluation.

   Weaknesses:

   The quality and integrity of the teacher training on the software is inadequately addressed. The application indicates that the teacher training will be content based and responsive to data, but how this will be assessed is not explained. There needs to be greater explanation (pgs e23-e24) as to how teacher competency with the software is determined. If there are disappointing academic gains, it would be difficult to determine whether the intervention is lacking or if teachers have insufficient facility with the technology.

   Reader's Score: 18

2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

   Strengths:

   The intervention will be formally assessed for the qualitative research questions (e38) providing performance feedback. School personnel will be surveyed at baseline and annual intervals with an adapted version of an established survey tool with demonstrated reliability and validity.

   Weaknesses:

   No apparent weaknesses in this area,

Sub

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) 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. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The logic model of the application clearly articulates the key intervention components and outcomes. School and student mediators are specified (e34-e35).

A measurable threshold for acceptable implementation is provided.

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide a specification of the necessary effect sizes to demonstrate successful student outcomes.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/07/2022 02:35 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)
Reader #2:   **********

	Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	24
Total	30	24

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: CommonLit, Inc. (S411C220171)

Questions

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: 24

>   **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 with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)**

>   **Strengths:**

>   The application has identified an external evaluator, CPRE, that has the background and experience to conduct the planned evaluation. The CV for the lead researcher at CPRE is provided in the application and this individual has the experience to lead the evaluation. The planned evaluation has two components, an impact study and an implementation study. The impact study will use a cluster randomized controlled trial that will meet WWC standards without reservations if well implemented. The management plan time-line includes applying for IRB approval. The use of three different implementation schedules for the treatment schools is well explained in the application. These schedules will allow for two separate studies, one to make same grade comparisons and a second study to analyze school level differences. The 2nd analysis also will address how "business-as-usual" teacher preparation might impact results. The proposed software will be selected as the core program at treatment schools, which will ensure teacher participation in the impact study.

>   **Weaknesses:**

>   It is not clear how the proposed impact study will evaluate how the patterns of effectiveness evolve over time (a component of the 2nd research question). The application does not include details about student-level covariates to be included in the data analyses. It is not clear if the study will evaluate the impact of their software on special needs students, which is the group the software proposes to support. The application includes training teachers to use the new software and to help them to use UDL, but does not describe this training or provide training stipends for teachers

>   **Reader's Score: 17**

>   2. **(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

>   **Strengths:**

>   The application indicates that regular "step backs" will be taken to evaluate new feedback and incorporate appropriate changes to the software implementation. Step backs identified in the application involve data collection

Sub

specific from surveys, completion rates, and interviews to determine program areas that need improvement.

Weaknesses:

Net Promoter scores are not defined in the application. It is not clear if this is a suitable tool for assessing teachers' use of the software or the software itself.

Reader's Score: 4

3. **(3) 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. (5 points)**

Strengths:

The management plan includes specific measurable outcomes for the pilot study and impact studies. Outcomes related to teaching include regular monitoring to identify learning gaps and time devoted to student engagement; outcomes related to learning include improved reading and writing skills and increased subject knowledge. "Real time" data will be collected to assess thresholds for implementation.

Weaknesses:

The application does not provide sufficient detail about mediators or on how data about mediators is included in the data analysis model. Goals for measurable thresholds are not defined in the application, making it difficult to determine if these are being met.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/02/2022 09:36 AM