

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2023 02:49 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	22
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	23
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	90
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	6
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	6
<b>Total</b>	112	101

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - AHC-NA - 5: 84.422B

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

Applicant: Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

## 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:

(i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

##### Overview:

The rationale for project discusses targeting high school and middle teachers and students in disadvantage communities for high quality and inclusive U.S. history and civic education through hands-on activities and social emotional learning. The approach is exceptional as it addresses high need teachers and students and creates new approaches to understanding current political divisions and new skills of political dialogue.

##### Supporting Statements:

##### Strengths:

The proposal has three objectives. 1) "Provide Illinois high school and middle school teachers—especially those in disadvantaged communities—and preservice teachers with inclusive and up-to-date information about American government and history, and civic engagement." 2) "Using research and best practices in social emotional learning (SEL), psychology and in methods of teaching history and civics, provide innovative, hands-on strategies to teachers." 3) "Give teachers strategies, based on civics education best practices, to facilitate student experiences centered around advocacy, deliberation, and engagement in controversial issues, fostering dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations." (p. e10) The proposed project is exceptional as it applies social emotional learning to teachers and students in the context of learning history and civics as it will prepare them to understand charged political discussions.

Key activities that support these objectives are focused on summer institutes for teachers and a constitutional convention for students. (p. e 13) The logic model is detailed as all three objectives/goals are separately explained in term of inputs, activities, outputs, short-term outcomes, medium term outcomes, long-term outcomes, and impact. (pp. e56-58) The project's logic model shows clear deliverables (outputs) and intended measurable impact (outcomes).

#### Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- i. **The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8 points)**
- ii. **The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)**
- iii. **The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)**

**Strengths:**

Overview:

The proposed project will address the problems of meeting the needs of current and preservice high school and middle school teachers and students in low income and disadvantaged settings by providing them with enriched hands-on U.S. history and civics and government instruction and learning. The proposal outlines the specific gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructure and opportunities and how the new approaches will address these needs. The proposal expresses how these new approaches will improve teaching and learning in low income and disadvantaged schools.

Supporting Statements:

Strengths:

The magnitude of the problem is identified in the new instructional mandates facing current teachers in schools in Illinois, as they must ensure that state "requirements for inclusive history instruction, civics education, and media literacy mandates." (p. e17, pp. e368-374) Compounding the problem is that "32% of teachers reported that "[they] don't feel confident that [they] know enough about these topics to address them with [their] students." (p. e22-23) The issue of student of achievement is revealed in NAEP scores, as 8th grade students and their achievement levels: 31% are "basic" in civics and 40% did not meet "basic" in US history. (p. e23) The proposal notes that the need to work with Chicago public schools in targeting disadvantaged communities. (p. e26)

To address the need for better services for students, the proposal focuses on "recruitment of current and preservice teachers who do or will teach in underserved communities" with help from DePaul University, Loyola University, and University of Illinois Chicago who "students and alumni teach in underserved areas." (p. e30)

To alleviate economic concerns of potential participants in professional learning, teachers who are selected will receive stipends for summer institutes and students from high need areas will have expenses covered such as travel and materials. (p. e 31)

The proposal uses new approaches and discusses how hands on civic engagement will promote educational equity for middle and high school students by having them participate in a statewide Constitutional Convention. Activities such as these are rarely available to underserved students and participation "will help them develop their own voices, engagement, and leadership abilities." (p. e32)

Another innovative approach is that the proposal emphasizes social-emotional learning for teachers and students as "society becomes more fiercely polarized, particularly around social/political issues." (p. e44) Using a set of 4 techniques, teachers and students will have "a toolbox to pull from during the discussions to manage their own emotional arousal, and thereby also being able to more effectively engage in these types of conversations." (p. e46)

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal does not discuss more specifically what are the underserved schools in Illinois and how they will be targeted. For instance, it could have discussed which schools in Chicago would benefit from participation the proposed program.

**Reader's Score: 22**

## 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:

- i. 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. (13 points)
- ii. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)

### Strengths:

#### Overview:

The management plan discuss how it will achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. The proposal includes procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

#### Supporting Statements:

#### Strengths:

As noted above, the logic model is detailed and explain how its 3 objectives (understanding the American system of government civic engagement, and American history, best practices in social-emotional learning, student advocacy and controversial issues) will be met. (p. e56-58)

The initiative combines the resources of three leading partners, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicage-Kent College of Law, and the Constitutional Democracy Project (CDP). (p. e14) The CDP has recent experience with youth summits "focused on defunding the police, the regulation of artificial intelligence, and electric vehicle mandates." (p. e15) In addition, the proposal outlines the experience in psychology, education, history, and curriculum. (p. e17)

The proposal includes a detailed timeline with activities, deliverables/outcomes, strategy, persons involved, and resources from October 2023 to September 2026. (pp. e353-366)

The role of feedback ("continuous improvement" is not widely used in the proposal) is discussed throughout the proposal and its purpose is for "internal evaluation." (p. e29) Feedback will also be important for student activities such as the Convention (p. e30) and teacher and student feedback will help in the revision of materials. (p. e47-48) Feedback, especially for social-emotional learning, will be gathered and used both immediately after a teacher workshop and months later after use in the classroom. (p. e50, 52, 53)

### Weaknesses:

The proposal seems reluctant to use the concept, "continuous improvement," and relies on using the term "feedback" for the practice of gather information from participants and using the data to modify the proposal activities.

Reader's Score: 23

## Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

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

- i. The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)
- ii. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)
- iii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the

**project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)**

**iv. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)**

**Strengths:**

Overview:

The proposal discusses the level of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organizations. The budget narrative explains costs and how they relate to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The proposal demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant. The proposal demonstrates the commitment of its partners. The proposal show the relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

Supporting Statements:

Strengths:

The proposal notes that the Illinois Institute of Technology will provide fiscal support by with administrative and accounting services with its fourteen research administrators and grant accountants. (p. e14)

The proposal further discusses substantial support "in the form of office and event space, equipment, technology, and both technical and administrative assistance" at the Chicago-Kent College of Law at the Illinois Institute of Technology (p. e15, e54) The proposal includes discussion and letters of commitment from its partners and curriculum vitae of its management team and consultants. (pp. e51-54, e251-350) It also discusses how it will connect to Chicago Public Schools and has a letter of support. (pp. e15, e350)

The budget narrative explains and justifies every expense over the three-year period. (pp. e394-409).

The proposal discusses how the project will continue on as the curriculum and lesson plans will be made available to teachers anywhere. It also mentions its connection to schools education and how they will be able to recruit future participants and operate additional summer institutes. (p. e31)

**Weaknesses:**

The commitment from Chicago Public Schools does not come from the Superintendent. (p. e350) In addition, the discussion about partnering with other public schools is general (p. e10 and e25) and no other letter of commitment comes from an LEA. (pp. e340-45)

The continuation of the project is discussed only in terms of the availability of the curriculum, the integration of the project's content into preservice programs, professional development opportunities, and ongoing student activities. (p. e31) However, there is not a specific plan for continuation or expansion that includes a proposal budget and projected revenues over time.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement**

## 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

### Strengths:

#### Overview:

The project includes hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students and programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

#### Supporting Statements:

#### Strengths:

The proposal explains the importance of the US Constitution and the Bill Rights in determining the content of professional learning and student activities. (p. e19), especially in preparation for the mock statewide Constitutional Convention (p. e20) . The proposal gives a full discussion of substantive content for summer professional development and the importance of hands-on learning, especially with high school students. (p. e27) The proposal explains how the activity of the Constitution Convention "will give teachers the opportunity to put into practice the strategies they have learned and provide students with a hands-on learning experience." (p. 30)

### Weaknesses:

None noted.

**Reader's Score:** 5

## Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities

### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs(6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) 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 civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

**d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).**

**Strengths:**

The proposal describes a middle school and high school program that examines the sources of inequity and adequacy and provides civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices and and seeks to establish and improve the engagement of underserved community members by elevating their voices.

**Supporting Statements:**

One of the objectives of the program expressly states the goal of civic engagement: "Give teachers strategies, based on civics education best practices, to facilitate student experiences centered around advocacy, deliberation, and engagement in controversial issues, fostering dialogue among students from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations." (p. e10, emphasis added)

The proposal discusses the importance of the Constitutional Convention in terms of equity and elevating voices: "Often, students from underserved communities do not have the opportunity to attend programs outside their schools, in particular programs that require travel. Through the Convention, the project will provide underserved students with access to an enrichment opportunity that they would not ordinarily be able to engage in. Moreover, it will help them develop their civic engagement, their voices, and their leadership potential." (p. e37)

The proposal also discusses potential model lessons that speak to students of color: "Contributions and Experiences of Diverse Americans: Campaigns for Civil Rights (women, African Americans, Latinx, LGBTQIA+), Native American Sovereignty, Case Studies of Using the Courts to Advance Civil Rights." (p. e49)

**Weaknesses:**

Equity is discussed in general terms and the student population of Illinois is not described. In addition, the proposal does not mention the rate of poverty, changing ethnicity in Illinois and Chicago, or language groups.

**Reader's Score: 6**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/04/2023 02:49 PM



Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/07/2023 09:24 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	25
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	25
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	30
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	100
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	7
<b>Total</b>	112	112

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - AHC-NA - 5: 84.422B

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

Applicant: Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

## 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:
  - (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)
  - (ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

Overview: The application provides a well-supported high quality project design with an extensive support of the rationale and multiple examples of how the project will uniquely address the priorities of the competition.

- i. The applicant provides a clearly demonstrated rationale through identifying its target audience as middle and high school teachers as well as students in need of comprehensive civil education. With a plan of transformative professional development and hands-on instruction the applicant will be able to exceed their goals in civil education (e13-21).
- ii. The applicant provides substantial evidence of the target audience which are educators and students of the state of Illinois. The project also details the challenges which makes this project necessary including limited resources in the schools (e13-21). The project doesn't limit itself to providing traditional instruction, but also helps educators as well as administrators create an equitable and safe learning environment with Social Emotional Learning which benefits the teachers and the students (e13-21).

The applicant extensively details how the proposed project seeks to resolve the learning environment and civil education issues through the evidence-based practice of social emotional learning as well a unique hands-on learning experiences(e13-21). The project provides an exceptional approach to the priorities by including not only classroom instruction, but also discussion of current events and controversial issues and simulations of democratic processes in professional development. The project helps teachers in Illinois meet its inclusive history, civics education, and media literacy requirements by giving them a tool to manage their students and own feelings when discussing challenging civic content(e13-21).

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. **The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. **The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - ii. **The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)**
  - iii. **The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)**

**Strengths:**

Overview: The application provides a well supported high quality project design with an extensive support of the rationale and multiple examples of how the project will uniquely address the priorities of the competition.

- i. The applicant provides a clearly demonstrated rationale by addressing the needs for professional development for high school teachers and the rationale for the project's emphasis of transformation in the approach to civic and US government (e20-22).
- ii. The applicant provides substantial evidence of the target audience which are disenfranchised students in urban Chicago as well as rural areas of the state of Illinois (e20-22).

The applicant extensively details how the project seeks to resolve those issues through the evidence-based practice of social emotional learning, critical thinking and problem-solving skills to the target population. The project also provides Constitution Convention which allows students an opportunity to connect and utilize the skills they've learned as active citizens. The educators also get similar opportunities to utilize the social emotional learning as well as the civil education content. (e22-e24, e29-30, e32, e36-40, e42, e47-49).

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant states this program will be executed in metro Chicago and downstate, but doesn't provide enough evidence to support how it will be conducted and supported outside of the metro Chicago area (e22-25).

**Reader's Score: 25**

**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:**
  - i. **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. (13 points)**
  - ii. **The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)**

**Strengths:**

Overview: The management plan described by the applicant is adequate to achieve the objectives of the proposed project. There is potential for success with the reasonable budget, team whose roles are clearly defined and sufficient timelines. The components which need clarity are the activities which appear to repeat the objective. There are milestones which repeat the activities instead of making clear distinction of a moment of desired accomplishment within the project. The goals and objectives for the project are clearly detailed and achievable. The applicant has clearly defined the responsibilities of their management team which are sufficient for completing each activity of the project (e39-43, e353-366).

The applicant has provided substantially adequate procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement. This was established through providing seven modalities for obtaining feedback from stakeholders. Those methods include but are not limited to feedback loops and reflective practices as well as monitoring through the use of key performance indicators (e45-47, e47-48, e50-51)

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

1. **The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. **The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)**
  - ii. **The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - iii. **The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)**
  - iv. **The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)**

**Strengths:**

Overview: The application has provided evidence of substantial adequacy of resources ranging from facilities, costs, support of stakeholders, ability for long-term sustainability, and partner commitment.

Illinois Tech is a private, technology-focused, research university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. Illinois Institute of Technology receives approximately \$25 million in direct federal grants, cooperative agreements and contracts each year, and approximately \$32 million in total sponsored funding (e14-15). Illinois Institute of Technology currently has three active training awards from the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$1.9 million (e14-15). The university has a dedicated staff of fourteen research administrators and grant accountants that support faculty with the preparation of proposals and the management and reporting of awarded funds. Illinois Tech partnered with Chicago Kent Law School and the Constitutional Democracy Project. It is clear the applicant has the ability to successfully execute this project with the support of this partner who has the access to resources and knowledge needed (e14-15).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 30**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)**

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

**Strengths:**

Overview:

Upon examining the sources of inequity and inadequacy, the applicant has developed a rigorous and engaging approach to learning which is inclusive and innovative.

The applicant has developed a promising project which has both hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students as well as a program which allows them to explore and discuss challenging civic and U.S history in a safe learning environment. The applicant offers social emotional learning as an innovative strategy to help educators as well as students (e14). The exceptional culminating component of the project is the Constitutional Convention where students prepare and engage in activities which provide evidence of their grasp of civic history, and the Constitution including the Bill of Rights (e32, e36-40, e42, e47-49 e48-49).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities**

**1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)**

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs(6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile

justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) 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 civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).

**Strengths:**

Overview:

Upon examining the sources of inequity and inadequacy, the applicant has developed a rigorous and engaging approach to learning which is inclusive and innovative.

The project was designed to engage and improve the underserved students of Chicago and the rural areas of Illinois. The students include African American, Hispanic and Native American students. The students have been underserved outside of the classroom and in the classroom. (e21, e48-49).

The program which allows them to explore and discuss challenging civic and U.S history in a safe learning environment also gives them a voice in their community. The applicant offers social emotional learning as an innovative strategy to help educators as well as students, but it also helps students prepare for college, care and civic life. (e21, e29-30, e32, e36-40, e42, e47-49).

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:** 7

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**Status:** Submitted  
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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2023 10:37 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	20	20
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need	25	21
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	25	23
<b>Adequacy of Resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	24
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	88
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 1</b>		
<b>Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement</b>		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Student Access to Resources and Opportunities</b>		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
<b>Sub Total</b>	7	7
<b>Total</b>	112	100

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - AHC-NA - 5: 84.422B

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

Applicant: Illinois Institute of Technology (S422B230055)

## 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:
  - (i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale. (10 points)
  - (ii) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition. (10 points)

#### Strengths:

The proposal makes use of the "roadmap" for improved civics education produced by the Education for American Democracy (EAD) project. (E21-E22). The proposal does a good job of citing published literature about the effectiveness of inquiry-based learning projects (Page E24, fn 12), including Social Emotional Learning (SEL) of difficult concepts when applied to civics and government (Page E20).

The proposal aims to build on past work by IIT-Chicago Kent College of Law with the Constitutional Democracy Project. That project has encouraged civics education in Chicagoland schools at a time when other civic education projects ended, around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pages E14-E15). The workshops for teachers are well-conceived.

A bonus is to involve pre-service teachers in the workshops (Page E17). The idea for a student-led constitutional convention is exciting and has the likelihood that as many as 500 students will be motivated to engage in the democratic process. This is a good instance of an exceptional approach.

#### Weaknesses:

None identified

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:
  - i. The magnitude or severity of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project. (8 points)
  - ii. The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses. (7 points)
  - iii. The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. (10 points)



**Strengths:**

The proposal cites NAEP test data that 31% of 8th graders do not meet proficiency in civics knowledge, and 40% of 8th graders did not achieve proficiency in US history (Page E23). This indicates a serious problem at the national level, as well as at the local level in Chicagoland.

One of the reasons for this low level of achievement that the proposal identifies is that teachers themselves do not feel knowledgeable or qualified to teach certain topics about civics (Pages E23-E2). This is an important placement of a spotlight on the shortcoming that teaching faculty in middle and high schools feel.

The project aims to address this through the pair of teacher workshops, each to consist of 30 recruited teachers. The project staff at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) have a pledge from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to recruit teachers for the project (Page E26 and Page E350). Chicago Public Schools qualifies as a district that has great needs.

**Weaknesses:**

In response to sub-factor I.B.iii, other than CPS, the project does not identify other LEAs or districts that might wish to participate. There is no letters of support from districts that have cooperated with IIT on past projects. Those districts might be good partners for the planned workshops and professional development planned for Chicagoland.

An even bigger concern is the absence of supporting letters or commitments from any Downstate Illinois districts, since one-half of the project is slated to take place in Downstate Illinois. There are certainly districts in need in Downstate, but they have not been identified in this proposal. It is unclear how the IIT staff will do the recruiting for the Downstate workshop.

**Reader's Score:** 21

**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:**

- i. 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. (13 points)**
- ii. The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. (12 points)**

**Strengths:**

The management team and the consultants to the project have impressive backgrounds in published research and service projects in Illinois and elsewhere (Pages E40-E43) The faculty have the credentials to undertake summer workshops in Media Literacy and SEL. The workshops are well-designed to give teachers the confidence that they can return to their classrooms and engage their students in challenging topics related to civics and the democratic process. The proposal is convincing that the management of the project is well-planned.

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal indicates an acknowledgment that the project managers will gather feedback from participants and make use of the feedback to initiate changes and improvements (Page E29). However, in regard to sub-factor I.C.ii, the project

pledges to collect feedback through the three years but does not say much more than it will be gathered and used, but not for purposes of research publication (Page E29). This is concern because of the vagueness of the pledge and the lack of attention to how continuous improvement will be implemented on the project

**Reader's Score: 23**

### **Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the adequacy of resources, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
  - i. The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization or the lead applicant organization. (6 points)**
  - ii. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. (8 points)**
  - iii. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multiyear financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, LEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence. (8 points)**
  - iv. The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. (8 points)**

#### **Strengths:**

IIT-Chicago Kent College of Law has a strong record of supporting educational outreach projects, especially through its Constitutional Democracy Project (CDP) since 2020. It is an advantage to a civics proposal with a focus on the US Constitution to have faculty and staff from an accredited law school such as Chicago Kent involved in the project.

The budget is well-conceived and it is a strength of this proposal that teacher training stipends are established at \$2,500 per teacher and in addition, there are stipends for pre-service teachers from the cooperating IHLs at \$1,000 per person (Page E409). There is good reason to think that this material reward to teachers for taking part in the project will result in good participation.

It is also a strength of this proposal that the ongoing CDP website will be used to host resources generated by the project (page E16). There is good reason to believe that CDP will be in place throughout the life of the grant and beyond.

The letter of support from the Social Studies coordinator of CPS is evidence that the district will encourage its social studies teachers to take part in the project (Page E350). In this reviewer's experience, it is important to have a key staff person in a large district such as CPS involved in supporting an external project, especially in recruiting teachers to make a commitment to the project.

#### **Weaknesses:**

In regard to stakeholders (sub-factor I.D.iii.), the absence of any commitment from Downstate LEAs or districts is a serious concern. One half of the programming on the grant is planned for Downstate but there is no identified partner.

It is commendable that Chicago Public Schools offered a letter of support (sub-factor I.D.iv.), but the letter is from the Social Studies coordinator for CPS. It would make a stronger case for the extent of commitment (sub-factor I.D.iv) if the CPS superintendent signed such a letter.

Reader's Score: 24

## Priority Questions

### Competitive Preference Priority 1 - Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement

#### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 1: Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, we provide funding to promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, principals, or other school leaders, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations. To meet this priority, a project must include one or both of the following-- a) Hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students; or b) Programs that educate students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights.

#### Strengths:

The Constitutional Convention will be for students in Grades 8-12, thus some of the middle schoolers and their teachers will be involved (Page E30). This is an exemplary instance of a hands-on civic engagement that brings teachers and students together from across Illinois.

#### Weaknesses:

None identified

Reader's Score: 5

### Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Student Access to Resources and Opportunities

#### 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (up to 7 points)

Under this priority, and applicant must demonstrate that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students—

a) in one or more of the following educational settings: (1) Early learning programs (2) Elementary school (3) Middle school (4) High school (5) Career and technical education programs (6) Out-of-schooltime settings (7) Alternative schools and programs (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities

b) That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or both of the following:

c) 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 civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices (up to 3 points).

d) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices, through their participation and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for

**leadership (e.g., establishing partnerships between civic student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives) (up to 4 points).**

**Strengths:**

The summer workshops planned for teachers promise instruction on the “experience of Americans of many different heritages and identities” (Page E19). This is evidence that the proposal authors have thought about inclusive learning.

The proposal promises that students involved in classroom discussion of challenging topics and who are also involved in the Constitutional Convention will gain confidence in the strength of their own voices, even as they learn better how to listen to other voices. (Page E32).

**Weaknesses:**

None identified

**Reader's Score:     7**

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