

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/03/2023 06:35 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	18
Need for Project		
1. Need	25	24
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	21
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	25
Sub Total	100	88
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Student Access to Resources and Opportunities		
1. Promoting Equity	7	6
Sub Total	7	6
Total	112	99

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - AHC-NA - 3: 84.422B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

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 Project will introduce “DCI’s/digital civic inquiries” (e9) to eighth-grade teachers in Washington, DC, public and charter schools. The teachers will learn to encourage students to engage in research on civic issues using credible digital sources, discuss potential policy solutions, and take action to advocate for their preferred solutions.
- The project will involve curriculum development, professional development for teachers, and coaching support, with the goal of enhancing teachers' confidence and students' civic knowledge and skills. (e12) Direct work will be with 50 teachers over the course of the project. (e30)
- Long-term benefits for the teacher field can be built through professional development and coaching support provided to teachers, including “teacher leaders,” in this project.
- Analyzing student and teacher surveys, including audio and video data from professional development, coaching sessions, and the lessons themselves will help provide detail for deeper learnings. (e10)

Weaknesses:

- Finding ways to align new curricula with with existing education standards and requirements is a challenge—this was not well explained in the application. (For example, the applicants may find resistance to integrating DCIs into the existing eighth-grade curriculum, which would significantly impact project success.
- Involving 2,500 students (e10) in at two project phases will require access to technology and other materials for all students—which could pose a logistical and financial challenge for participating schools, making this a less than exceptional design.

Reader's Score: 18

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:

- This project capitalizes on recent changes to the curricula landscape in DC. In June of this year, DC approved new social studies standards that include a redesigned eighth-grade civics course centering digital media literacy, discussion, and civic action. (e16). This is both a strength and an opportunity of the project.
- The proposal recognizes the critical link between civics and media literacy, making these core to the curriculum and lifting up media and information literacy as essential to civic life. (e31)
- The application makes good use of citations of recent research on student evaluative approaches. (e32-36)
- Additionally, the project's curriculum design principles (e19, e20-23) emphasize relevance and authenticity to reflect and support students' interests, knowledge, and needs, making it inclusive and culturally responsive.
- The application addresses the need for training to enhance teachers' skills in facilitating discussions about controversial issues, especially considering that teachers with varying levels of experience might face challenges in framing inquiry and deliberation effectively. (e37)

Weaknesses:

- The project design includes students taking action but is missing community engagement. Projects focused on digital inquiry could still be connected to local organizations and policymakers. The application states the "Project DCI would help students learn to evaluate the credibility of that information, to discuss what they learn with other impacted community members, and to advocate for change." (e31) Engaging with external stakeholders would help students understand the real-world implications of their actions and foster a sense of agency and responsibility, which is the stated goal.

Reader's Score: 24

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 resources applied to the DCI Institute (e25-27) to assist teachers to be able to evaluate online information more effectively will assist teachers in civics education and when teaching other topics.
- Implementing innovative curricular approaches can be challenging, especially when aligning them with existing education standards and requirements. This cannot be accomplished by staff or consultants alone. The coaching team (e26), by watching videos of teachers, will both assist teachers by suggesting improvement, and by gathering feedback on student engagement in the lessons. By studying their peers and making note of where they themselves can improve or adjust will add both a observational learning component and allow participating teachers to model their work for others.
- The inclusion of key partners, and a detailed timeline gave this reviewer more confidence in the management plan. (e40-44) The plan includes detail on responsibilities of both the applicant and its partners, and a corresponding set of activities as part of a timeline. , (e38-44)

- Choosing to work with a DC-based cohort, given UMD's existing relationships, will allow for faster adoption and scale of this project. (e53)
- The inclusion of evaluation questions and corresponding data sources (e45-47) is thorough and demonstrates the applicant's advance planning work.

Weaknesses:

- There may be resistance or difficulties in integrating DCIs into the existing eighth-grade curricula, impacting the successful execution of the project. The work plan lacks detail on how the applicant will overcome resistance to participation (e18-20).
- While the plan outlines various program goals and intended outcomes, the evaluation measures presented in Table 4 (e44-47) focus primarily on quantitative data related to teachers' and students' performance and attitudes.
- A further explanation of data collection and analysis lacks strong focus in the management plan. (e48-49 and e92)

Reader's Score: 21

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:

- The applicant presents a management plan well aligned with the project's stated goals, and contains sufficient detail roles and responsibilities of the project team members with corresponding timelines for deliverables.
- The use of UMD staff and in-kind resources gives this application value, while placing grant resources closer to the project work. (e51) This is expressed in UMD's commitment to sharing "IT support, software (e.g., Qualtrics), video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom), library and research support for curriculum development, meeting rooms, and offices for project staff, including a dedicated office for the to-be-hired Project Coordinator."
- Making the curriculum and training materials available as free and open-sourced (e51) delivers further value to participants. A commitment to sharing best practices for delivering the content, as well as refined and revised curricular materials will improve the efficacy of both content and delivery over time, based on the strong evaluative component of the application.
- The commitment to enduring administrative support at each school will help direct resources only to those schools where a principal has responded favorably to the project. "The research team sends a letter to principals at schools where teachers work who are interested in participating in the research portion of the study. The letter provides details about the project, including the total time commitment for teachers, and principal's support will be requested. If principal support is not provided, teachers will not participate in the research study." (e9)
- The creation of Teacher Leaders (e12) to build capacity for a corps of support for teachers will help to sustain the

curricular innovations over time.

- There is adequate support for this project demonstrated in (e152-155) from identified partner organizations (ex. Close-Up Foundation) lend credibility to the long-term success of this project.
- Teacher stipends and travel support are hidden in the budget but are well-defined in the budget narrative. (e170) Teacher stipends are a proven way to gain support for participation.

Weaknesses:

- Introducing DCI's may require even more effort than articulated here to ensure that students have the necessary digital literacy skills when both and teachers and students might face difficulties in navigating and evaluating online sources.
- This reviewer does not see a work-around to account for digital illiteracy among the participants, the presence of which could lead to potential disparities in learning outcomes.
- While this application highlights support from partners and stipends for participants, there are weaknesses in project sustainability. There is little mention of sustainability beyond the grant term, despite increasing need for digital literacy as defined in the grant application.
- Ongoing efforts of the "Coaching Team" are mentioned (e29), but the application lacks a clear plan for future engagement of these trained educator/coaches after the project term is completed.

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:

- The program design includes teaching students to evaluate a range of digital sources and use credible sources to inform their opinions. This includes discussing what they learn about the issues and potential policy solutions, and how to take action to advocate for their preferred solutions. (e15, e33)
- The application states that they will move beyond classroom education to teach students to evaluate digital content AND help them practice what comes next in civic life: using what they learn about an issue from credible sources to inform discussions, decisions, and action. (e19) This is an exceptional and innovative approach.

Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted.

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:

- Application reports inclusion tribal organizations and offices of migrant education in partner state districts, to develop lessons and resources to support students to engage in civic discussions and action. (e21)
- The lack of equal access to effective evaluation strategies is especially worrying, considering that disinformation campaigns frequently target divisive topics like race and inequality. (e38)
- Even with the opportunity of a new DC curriculum model for civics education (and that of 18 additional states changing their education requirements (e16), implementing innovative curricular approaches will be challenging, especially when aligning these with existing educational standards and requirements. A commitment to working in low-income and diverse schools during this project, will give confidence that the project goals will be achieved in a variety of schools and school districts.

Weaknesses:

- The issue “digital divide” found among students from low-income homes may be acutely felt in the project design. By incorporating strategies for including students in internet research, evaluating online content, and “teaching a core set of digital evaluation and discussion strategies,” (e21-22) the applicant seeks to make internet access both a part of the curriculum and the long-term benefits to students. Those life-long skills will be less available to students without internet service or the physical assets (computers, tablets, phones) on which to use their new-found skills of civic life.

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	19
Need for Project		
1. Need	25	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	25
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	27
Sub Total	100	91
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Student Access to Resources and Opportunities		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
Sub Total	7	7
Total	112	103

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - AHC-NA - 3: 84.422B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

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 applicant demonstrates a well-developed rationale for the proposed project. The applicant represents a robust approach to the priorities established in the competition.

The robust projected proposal presents a stance to create a complete, customizable, and evidence-based professional learning program focused on civics education. With the already national reputation as a civics education provider, iCivics specifies it is an asset being designed to focused on helping teachers through professional development to learn to assess online information to participate in discussions, and then respond based on what they learn (p. e14 - e15).

For example, the Absolute Priority would be completed by the innovative curriculum and professional development program provided by Project DCI to meet students and teachers' needs (p. e 29). Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) 1 would be completed by providing teachers hands-on civics learning activities with others in the classroom to meet the needs of the students from low-income families and underserved population. (p. e29). CPP 2 would be fulfilled by ensuring 8th graders in DC have the experience to learn and evaluate online information to participate in discussions about civic issues (p. e31). The Invitational Priority would be fulfilled by involving students in activities that promote critical thinking and improve one's ability to use information to make civic decisions (p. e32).

Weaknesses:

The proposed project does not mention a plan of action to ensure all students have access to a technology device. It is unclear if students will be provided a device and internet access on a daily based or accommodated with both services if the parents/guardians are not able to provide these digital resources. Consideration for digital equity is key factor to be considered to ensure that each students will have access to the Digital Civic Inquiry educational opportunity to provide assurance of project success.

Reader's Score: 19

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 magnitude of the problem to be addressed by the proposed project focuses primarily on determining the truthfulness of digital technologies by teachers and students and its impact on the world while learning with a focus on civic engagement.

The extent to which specific gaps in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project is minimal. The gap between the access to accurate digital information and the access to information provided by the teachers impacts one's ability to have discussions with their peers. Being able to determine the accuracy of the information on the internet is a weakness. For example, a study of information on FaceBook by students revealed that they did not have the skills needed to identified the digital misinformation. (pp. e34 – e35).

The services to be provided by the proposed project are focused on those with greatest needs. For example, the proposed project will focus on teachers' digital media literacy and their skillset to adequately implement lessons on evaluating online information and guide a discussion (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

The proposed project is lacking opportunities to foster community engagement which is a major element of Digital Civics Inquiry which drive greater student's civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Civic education involves including the stakeholders. Advocating for change in civics education must not be a quiet endeavor, but an active process that may engage or influence others to action.

The extent to which specific gaps in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project is limited. The project does not focus on student civic engagement.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**
 - 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 applicant presents a management plan that is aligned with the program's objective. The project design provides adequate procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. As indicated on pages e38 – e44, for example, the plan includes clearly delineated responsibilities of personnel as well as key activities, milestones, and timelines, for accomplishing project tasks. For example, the timeline clearly communicates the activities to be completed during the 3-year period and identifies who will be responsibility for each key task. The

Project Director's responsibilities are outlined for the year as noted on pages e41 – e 44.

The budget is adequate to support the proposed project (pp. e156 – e167) within the time period of the grant. The costs identified on page e156 related to supplies and contractual services are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

The project will offer formative evaluation to guide internal improvement and summative evaluation to determine program effectiveness (p. e44). Using formative assessments to determine strengths and opportunities will position the applicant to monitor its progress towards its goals. Progress monitoring will be very help when the actual evidence is reviewed and analyzed for further work efforts.

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:

The application specifies adequate support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources, from the applicant organization. For example, on page e51, the application details that Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) will provide the meeting space for the DCI Institute and coaching sessions. Also, Project DCI will be able to draw upon the resources of the University of Maryland, College Park (p. e50).

The costs are adequate in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The costs identified on pages e156 to e166 related to salaries, contractual services, supplies, professional travel are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

The applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant. Based on the letters of support from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, District of Columbia Public Schools, and the partnership with Close Up Washington, DC, the applicant demonstrated commitment of partners and provided evidence of support from involved stakeholders (pp. e152 – e154).

The applicant provides convincing evidence of relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project (pp. e152– e154).

Weaknesses:

The projected proposal lacks a plan of action for the highly trained coaches after the grant ends (p. e50 – e57). The sustainability efforts are unclear once the grant ends. Also, consideration for addressing digital literacy challenges needs to be considered to support implementation of projected activities.

Reader's Score: 27

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 applicant specifies a proposed project that will promote new and existing evidence-based strategies to encourage innovative civics and government learning strategies and professional development activities and programs for teachers, particularly such instruction, strategies, activities, and programs that benefit low income students and underserved populations.

The proposed 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. For example, the teachers will participate in professional development training and coaching (p. e15).

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:

The applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved 8th grade students in middle schools (p. e12). The applicant specifies the potential to establish or improve the engagement of underserved community members informing and making decisions that influence policy and develop their political skillset and belief about impacting politics (p. e32).

The applicant specifies that a rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded approaches to learning that prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including civics programs that support students in understanding and engaging in American democratic practices. For example, the project is designed to establish and expand the engagement of underserved community members, with an emphasis on increasing awareness and making decisions that influence policy (p. e32). A key component of Civics education is moving a person to become so civically engaged as to not be reluctant to letting their voice be heard for the betterment of laws or procedures locally, in the state or nationally.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 7

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	20	18
Need for Project		
1. Need	25	25
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	25	25
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	30	27
Sub Total	100	95
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
Innovative Activities for Civic Engagement		
1. Civic Engagement	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Student Access to Resources and Opportunities		
1. Promoting Equity	7	7
Sub Total	7	7
Total	112	107

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - AHC-NA - 3: 84.422B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: University of Maryland College Park (S422B230033)

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:

(i) The applicant clearly presents a model for designing lessons through which students will become informed participants in the digital world. The figure on page e18 demonstrates an approach that uses the components of traditional social studies inquiry transformed through the lens of digital sources of information.

The applicant describes phases of curriculum development, professional development, and actual inquiry activities on pages e20-e27. The logic model on page e68 adequately describes the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the project. These components are clearly aligned with the high-quality project objectives and performance measures in the document on pages e171-e174.

The applicant clearly documents proposed lesson sequences, provides an overview of the teacher professional learning institute, and a schedule for the coaching model to be implemented.

(ii) The applicant presents a project focused on providing relevant and innovative lessons for civics learning and professional development to support teachers as they engage with students who spend a great deal of their time online (page e29).

The project uses approaches developed by McGrew (2020), Wineburg, et al.,(2022) and others that demonstrate success in teaching students to evaluate information they find online (page e29).

The applicant will base project lessons on four equity-driven, evidence-based design principles adapted from McGrew and Breakstone (2023): Relevance, Authenticity, Focus, and Support (page e21).

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses.

(ii) The project is designed to engage students in civics learning through the lens of the digital resources. The project will serve 8th grade teachers in schools that predominately serve underserved populations as described on page e15. One of the core lessons to be taught—focus— requires students to read online materials, open new tabs, and add filters, implying students will be actively using computers/technology in the learning. The application would benefit from evidence to show that access at home and/or access at school or in the community is necessary and is available to students. (2 points not awarded)

Reader's Score: 18

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:

(i) The applicant identifies key factors that comprise the need for the project. First, students and teachers are grappling with the immense access to information available through the internet. As described by the applicant on page e34, the internet is also a source of mis- and/or disinformation that can be a threat to a healthy democratic society. Second, the political polarization and decline in civility the U.S. democracy is facing makes it imperative for students to have skills to navigate civic inquiry in the digital world.

(ii) The application describes three gaps in the delivery of civics learning that the project will address. Those are: teachers' digital media literacy, professional development to support the work of teachers in helping student to evaluate online resources, and the ability of teachers to facilitate discussions and engage with students about controversial topics (page e36-e37).

(iii) The application provides evidence that the target populations will be public and charter schools in the local area that serve predominately underserved students. Specific evidence is provided on page e29 that 64% of students identify as African American, 20% identify as Hispanic/Latino, 50% of students are identified as at risk, and 60% are eligible for free-or-reduced- price lunch.

The applicant references a study on page e38 showing that students from disadvantaged backgrounds demonstrated gaps in digital evaluation tasks compared to other students. This project is intended to provide critical learning opportunities to students in these school communities.

Weaknesses:

- (i) No weaknesses.
- (ii) No weaknesses.
- (iii) No weaknesses.

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:

(i) The applicant clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of key personnel, presents clear timelines and milestones, and presents a funding amount that appears adequate to support the project. Based on the information provided on page e38-e50, the project can be achieved on time and within budget.

The project director and leadership team members have the qualifications to ensure the project achieves its stated goals and deliverables. Their responsibilities are identified on page e39-e40.

A general timeline for the three years of the project as well as a detailed timeline for years 1 and 2 is on pages e41-e44 and provides clear evidence of timelines for completing the project on time.

(ii) The applicant includes on pages e44-e50 procedures that are adequate for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in project operations. The Evaluation Team will conduct both formative and summative evaluations in collaboration with the Leadership Team. Continuous refinement of the project components will be informed by the formative data.

As described by the applicant, outcome and observation measures will be finalized upon award of the grant. The proposal provides clear and appropriate evaluation questions and data sources on pages e45-e47.

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses.

(ii) No weaknesses.

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:

(i) The applicant provides clear evidence that the substantial resources of the applicant's lead organization will be available to support the successful implementation of the project. Facilities including meeting spaces and dedicated offices for personnel are described on page e51, and the organization's IT support and software resources are available to be used by the project team. The organization is a research-intensive university and has the experience and personnel to ensure that grant funds are appropriately used.

(ii) The proposed project will provide professional development and coaching for 50 teachers who will in turn reach approximately 2500 students in the first year (page e52). The project is also designed to train an additional 10 teacher leaders who will then support other teachers in the schools.

The costs are reasonable, particularly in relation the numbers of students who will gain civic knowledge as well as the knowledge and skills to effectively evaluate information from the internet and become more skilled participants in their communities (page e52).

(iii) As described by the applicant on page e53, the project is anchored by three core partners that are established in

the local area. In addition, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education was instrumental in gaining the approval of the State Board of education for the new social studies standards and has provided a letter of support for the project (page e53) . The applicant provides six letters of support on pages e152-e154. The design of the project is such that trained teacher leaders will be in the schools after the funding period ends.

(iv) The application thoroughly describes the relevance and commitment of the partners in the project. The Leadership Team includes a representative from each of the project partners as well as the project director and the evaluator.

The applicant describes on page e55-e57 the ways in which the key project teams will work together to ensure the successful implementation of the project. One example on page e56 is that the professional development team will begin planning a one-week institute in Winter 2024 using the data and feedback from project participants and other project staff.

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses.

(ii) The applicant provides limited evidence of the sustainability of the project beyond the grant period other than the commitment of three existing partners. Even though the grant is not large relative to the overall budget expenditures, having the support of a current political official and having trained Teacher Leaders as described on page e51 will not be enough to sustain the project. (3 points not awarded.

(iii) No weaknesses.

(iv) No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 27

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:

(a) The proposed project will support teachers to implement hands-on civic learning activities with students from low-income families and underserved populations served by the target schools. The applicant describes a problem students and their families might want to learn more about and instead of just searching the information out, the hands-on project would help them evaluate the information for credibility, to discuss what they learn with others, and to advocate for change (page e31). As described by the applicant, teachers make classrooms into places where students build knowledge and skills they need to be informed citizens (page e31).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

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:

a. The applicant describes a project that will promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for eighth grade(middle school) students in the target schools.

b. The applicant makes the case on page e31 that inequalities in access to information can arise when lessons in media literacy only exist in elective courses and not within the core curriculum. This project will provide resources to teachers in social studies classrooms as they support students to evaluate online information and participate in discussions about the civic issues they research (page e31).

c. The applicant describes on page e31-e32 that students will participate in rigorous and engaging inquiry arcs that will help them develop democratic practices relative to being an informed person in the digital age. Students will become better prepared for college, career, and civic life with these skills they develop through this type of classroom learning.

d. Participants in the project will have access to activities that will enable them to become more knowledgeable about local and federal policy issues (page e32) and grow in their own political efficacy. The project will support students to research policy issues, to consider policy alternatives, and to design action plans to advance the alternatives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 7

Status: Submitted

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