

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/26/2022 05:33 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium Inc (S310A220038)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	25
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	20
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	20
Sub Total	80	79
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	89	88

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SFEC Tier 1 Panel - 3: 84.310A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium Inc (S310A220038)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. A. Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 points).

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

- (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.
- (2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant describes a comprehensive conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. The applicant proposes the Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center (CAFÉ), the current regional Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC) serving both Maryland and Pennsylvania. As it is an established partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Café will utilize the opportunity to build on the lessons learned from working with the two states. CAFÉ, with its partners, will co-construct a systemic family engagement implementation plan that will be aligned with each state's birth-21 framework to build the skills for long-term engagement, promote child development, and support student achievement. The applicant, as a social justice organization implements educational excellence, culturally responsive family engagement, and equity. The applicant provides a conceptual framework in the Logic Model, including inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (short-term; mid-term, and long-term). The conceptual framework to family engagement is based on two basic assumptions: 1) Families are true experts and best advocates for their children; and 2) The complex intersections of race, socioeconomic status, gender/gender identity, religion, ethnicity, disability, and language must be addressed to facilitate engagement. The applicant describes the research showing that schools that embrace diversity and equity are more successful at engaging families and students and achieving great improvement in child development and academic achievement (Fergus et.al., 2014; Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Oakes, 2018). The applicant indicates that the principles from the Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family School Partnerships (Mapp & Bergman, 2019) are embedded in the project design. This Framework will ensure that families and school staff work together to improve outcomes for all students. The conceptual framework is based on the following four essential elements: culturally sustaining pedagogy, multi-directional practices, asset-based approach, and the collective benefits of family engagement. CAFÉ's focus on equity requires developing rigorous curricula for hybrid and in-person learning, and supporting families' capacity to support high-quality, culturally responsive education (pgs. 1-4; e63).

(2) The applicant describes comprehensive services to be provided by the proposed project that reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices. The applicant describes extensive research that shows systemic culturally responsive, high-impact family and community engagement is a critical strategy to advancing educational equity, improving student academic and personal well-being, and increasing success in low-performing schools (Bryk et al., 2010; Chavkin, 2017; Jacques & Villegas, 2018; Mapp & Bergman, 2021). Home Visits are one of CAFÉ's proposed evidence-based programs with partner Parents as Teachers (PAT), facilitates trust, relationship-building, and engagement during

the early years and are linked to lower school truancy and better reading outcomes (Sheldon & Jung, 2019). The project proposes to continue to use West-Ed's Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) an evidence-based program, to build the capacity of educators and parents to transform the way families participate in their children's education. The project proposed to use Parent Powered's Ready4K Trauma-Informed program, a whole child, evidence-based, family engagement curriculum delivered via text messages to help strengthen parent resilience. The applicant proposes partnering with a Parent's Place of MD (the parent training and information center) to implement the family leadership curricula, including adult and financial literacy, to support underserved families (pgs. 4-8).

(3) The applicant clearly describes how the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance. The proposed project, CAFÉ, will promote sustainability through systemic targeted interventions, strategies, and analysis. The applicant demonstrates that the proposed initiatives will be institutionalized by using the combined skills of CAFÉ, the Advisory Committees, its partners, and key consultants to promote evidence-based strategies in policy, practice, and messaging. This process will engage and empower all stakeholders, including State Education Agencies (SEAs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, teachers, students, families, and community members. Each CAFÉ initiative works to strengthen knowledge and skills and to create systems change to ensure sustainability. The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Maryland State Department of Education have committed staff to create SEA policies and structures that support sustained impact. The advancement of state family engagement birth-21 frameworks will result in a comprehensive strategic document that can be used and revised by the SEA beyond the five-year grant period (pgs. 18-19.)

Weaknesses:

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

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. B. Quality of the Management Plan (up to 20 points).

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

- (1) The 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.**
- (2) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**
- (3) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project.**
- (4) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**
- (5) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the**

operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant describes a detailed 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. The services have been designed to ensure that the budget, timeline, personnel, and resources to address the purpose, goals, and objectives of the project. The applicant provides a clear organizational plan for the proposed project. The applicant provides a very thorough chart that shows clearly defined responsibilities, timeline, objectives, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. For example, a Main Task (CAFÉ will act as a coordinating hub for regional and statewide family engagement efforts by SEAs by creating and sustaining partnerships and leveraging network expertise) is aligned with Milestones (review and revise a vision statement for the network; assess and identify the needs of the network as well as the needs of individual organizations; establish cross-organizational committees to promote the sharing of information); Project Goals and Objectives (G1; Obj 2; Obj 2; Obj 3); Person Responsible (Project Manager, CAFÉ staff, SEAs); and Year (1) (pgs. 19-22).

(2) The applicant describes clear procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. The proposed project will utilize the technical assistance model, Continuous Improvement for Equity (CI4E), which offers a systematic approach to confronting educational inequities by analyzing systems and using this learning for improvement (Valdez et al., 2020). The project design integrates continuous improvement for equity procedures to ensure services are provided to meet the needs of clients. The project will utilize the continuous feedback from the Advisory Committees and data collection via surveys and stakeholder interviews. The applicant describes the process for documenting the work, which will continuously inform the targeted improvement efforts. The applicant demonstrates that information collected provides data regarding the scope of work for each project, objective alignment, geographical area of service, and data alignment with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measures (pgs. 22-24).

(3) The applicant describes clear mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project. The applicant demonstrates that based on the CI4E model, all products and services undergo a thorough quality review using the latest research, standards for accessibility, and instructional design. Before publications are released, they are reviewed by the key leadership team, Advisory Committee members, and content experts. The project staff will collect data concerning the services through satisfaction surveys and client interviews. The Evaluation Team uses this data, with needs assessment data and other metrics, to produce bi-annual summative reports. These reports are shared with Technical Assistance (TA) providers, CAFÉ partners, Advisory Committees to identify trends, to highlight successful practices, and to support continuous improvement (pg. 24).

(4) The applicant clearly describes the time commitments of the Program Director and other key project personnel that are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. The time commitments of the Program Director and other key personnel include: Program Director (0.8 FTE), Senior Family Engagement Specialists (1.0 FTE and 0.7 FTE), Director of Evaluation and Continuous Improvement (0.2 FTE) (pgs. 24-25).

(5) The applicant demonstrates how the proposed project will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services. The applicant will incorporate diverse perspectives and resources in the operation of the project to meet the needs of underserved families across Maryland and Pennsylvania. CAFE has established relationships with parent groups; teachers; the business community; federally funded research, content, and comprehensive centers; community-based partners; advocacy-based organizations; and culturally diverse educational professionals with expertise in a variety of disciplines. The applicant describes the recruitment process for the Advisory Committee including the role, geographic location, and various social identities and backgrounds. The applicant demonstrates that the diverse stakeholders will unite through communities of practice, regional meetings, place-based parent education programs, and interstate networks (pg. 25).

Weaknesses:

- (1) No weaknesses were noted.
- (2) No weaknesses were noted.
- (3) No weaknesses were noted.
- (4) No weaknesses were noted.
- (5) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**1. C. Project Personnel (up to 15 points).**

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, in determining the quality of the management plan and project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors--

- (1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.**
- (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**
- (3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.**

Strengths:

The CAFÉ staff members represent multiple identities, deep knowledge, and diverse experience to sustain a thriving center. The applicant provides a General Educational Provisions Act (GEPA Section 427) Statement, including a statement of policy to provide equal employment opportunity to all employees and job applicants (pgs. 26; e9-e11).

- (1) The applicant clearly describes the qualifications of the Project Director, including formal training and work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project and experience in designing, managing, or implementing similar projects. For example, the Project Director holds the following minimum qualifications: Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction; and a bachelor's in Educational Psychology. This staff member is CAFE's current Program Director, and provides staff management, budget oversight, and liaisons with Maryland State Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Director had led professional development on culturally responsive and equitable family, schools, and community engagement for community school coordinators (pgs. 26; Appendix B-2: Resumes of Key Personnel).
- (2) The applicant describes the relevant qualifications of each of the key project personnel to serve in the project, including formal training and work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project. These key personnel include a Senior Family Engagement Specialist and the Director of Evaluation and Continuous Improvement. The Senior Family Engagement Specialist holds a master's degree in Ministry/Leadership Studies and in Asian Studies, a bachelor's degree in Political Science; holds a Graduate Certificate in School Administration and Supervision; has experience serving as a Title I Family Engagement/Title III Specialist; and provided Technical Assistance (TA) and guidance to LEAs on

implementing Title I and Title III requirements; and currently provides program assistance to support CAFÉ initiatives. The Senior Educational Equity Specialist holds a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, and Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.); has spent 15 years developing and coordinating out-of-school time programs in the non-profit sector; and currently manages projects for CAFÉ and is the project lead for the virtual workshop series Reunited: Families, Schools, and Communities Making it Work Together (a collaboration with the Family Involvement Conference in Pennsylvania). The Director of Evaluation and Continuous Improvement holds a Master of Education (Ed.M.) with a focus on quantitative research methods; has experience overseeing the applicant institution's Division of Evaluation and Continuous Improvement and serves as part of the leadership team; and has over two decades of experience working in evaluation (pgs. 26-28; Appendix B-2, Resumes of Key Personnel).

(3) The applicant describes the relevant research experience of project consultants, subcontractors, and partners. For example, the applicant demonstrates that the subcontractors and project consultants were selected for their expertise, content, and context specific technical assistance and services. They were also selected for their national leadership engagement and their demonstrated commitment to the purpose of the SFECs. The partners include the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) which is a 10-year national membership association for family, school, and community engagement. NAFSCE provides outreach to families and communities through its family engagement leadership network, family engagement specialists, national and statewide systemic work, and resource library. Parent Powered is a partner that provides Ready4K, a whole-child family engagement curriculum and supports children from birth through 5th grade. The partner, Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD), is Maryland's parent Training and information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center. WestEd is a partner that will provide a research and evidenced-based program, Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT) that equips families with the tools and strategies to help their children master the academic skills needed to succeed. Parents as Teachers (PAT) is a partner that provides training and resources to the CAFÉ program. The applicant provides resumes, with the qualifications, including training and experience, of key personnel from each of these partnerships (pgs. 29-30; e183-e301; e838-e882).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how it encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. The applicant does not provide a clear employment plan, including advertising open positions, encouraging applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented.

(1) No weaknesses were noted.

(2) No weaknesses were noted.

(3) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. D. Adequacy of Resources (up to 20 points).

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

(1) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

(2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and

potential significance of the proposed project.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant demonstrates the relevance and commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. For example, the applicant describes the relevance of the following partners: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the State Superintendent of Schools for MSDE and the Secretary of Education for PDE, Parent's Place of Maryland, WestED, and Ready4K. The applicant includes Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) and Letters of support from its partners. The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) and its partners, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), Ready4K, WestEd, Parents as Teachers (PAT), Parents Place of Maryland, and the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE), have received strong support in its effort to become the Maryland and Pennsylvania State(s) Family Engagement Center, Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center (CAFE) (pgs. 30-34; e72-e96 - Appendix A-1 (MOUs and Letters of Support)).

(2) The applicant describes costs that are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The costs are reasonable because the project staff have experience in delivering services at the lowest possible cost. The applicant proposes to meet two goals and six objectives, resulting in programs that vary in scope, intensity, and duration. The budget is reasonable and includes the following federal funds: \$820,222 (Year 1), \$837,384 (Year 2), \$819,359 (Year 3), \$803,831 (Year 4), \$813,981 (Year 5), for a total 5-year cost of \$4,953,007. The project will expand policy and advocacy to decrease barriers to family engagement. With its partners, the applicant will assist SEAs, LEAs, and schools in achieving systemic and equitable reform and positively impact educator, student, parent, and community outcomes. The applicant describes the matching funds for the CAFÉ program from the following partners: NAFSCE, Ready4K, Parent's Place of Maryland, and other organizations (pgs. 32-33; e834-e843).

(3) The applicant describes costs that are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits. For example, the proposed cost of \$989,909 for Year 1 is reasonable in relationship to the numbers of persons to be served and to the services they will receive, the quality and quantity of services, the resources needed to deliver services, and the agreement of the two states to collaborate for efficient and effective use of financial and human resources. Maryland and Pennsylvania comprise a total of 534 school districts, with 4,532 schools. In 2018, there were 896,827 students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in Maryland and 1,730,757 in Pennsylvania. At that time, 63.4% of students in Maryland and 35.4% of students in Pennsylvania were students of color. There were 635,285 students in Maryland and 1,186,383 in Pennsylvania that were young children (in grades prekindergarten to 8th grade). In 2018, Maryland served 84,120 multilingual students, 415,502 students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 110,563 students who were identified as having special needs. In 2018, Pennsylvania served 68,443 multilingual students, 867,871 students who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 327,908 students were identified as having special needs. CAFÉ's Universal services will target both family engagement professionals and families and will include a bilingual website, publications, and virtual events (pgs. 36; e834-e843).

Weaknesses:

(1) No weaknesses were noted.

(2) No weaknesses were noted.

(3) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2-- Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students (as defined in the notice inviting applications, NIA) and the educators who serve them, through one or more of the following priority areas:

- (a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families.
- (b) Providing resources and supports to meet the basic, fundamental, health and safety needs of students and educators.
- (c) Addressing students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic need through approaches that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear description of how the project will address Competitive Preference Priority 2: Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and faculty. The applicant demonstrates that in the target states, Maryland and Pennsylvania, academic engagement and student attendance has decreased since the start of the pandemic, especially for underserved students (Maryland State Department of Education, 2022; Pennsylvania Department of Education 2021). One in four Maryland households and nearly half of rural Pennsylvania students can't connect to Wi-Fi at home. The current and proposed project, Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center (CAFÉ), provided hot spots to ensure computer and internet access so parents and students could continue participating in virtual programming and remain engaged with school. The applicant will continue to conduct needs assessments to assess and address the needs of underserved students and educators. The state of Pennsylvania reports an increase in suicidal tips and one in three students in Maryland reports anxiety or depression symptoms (Safe2Say, 2020, Wenger, 2020). The applicant indicates that CAFÉ has produced a 4-page toolkit, Managing Mental Wellness: Tools for Yourself, Your Students, and Your Classroom (Appendix A-14) to support teacher and student wellness during COVID-19. CAFÉ will partner with Ready4K to provide parents with the Trauma-Informed family engagement curriculum based on the strengthening protective factors framework. The applicant describes a community asset mapping process to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and community-based organizations in connecting families to needed community resources. CAFÉ will continue to provide webinars, workshops, and Communities of Practice (CoPs) to assist with the long-term of Covid-19 (pgs. 9-10).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources, and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it 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-school-time settings.**
- (7) Alternative schools and programs.**
- (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and**
- (9) Adult learning.**

(b) That is designed to examine the sources of inequities related to, and implement responses through, one or more of the following:

- (1) 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 and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives)).**
- (2) Increasing student racial or socioeconomic diversity, through developing or implementing evidence-based policies or strategies that include one or more of the following:**
 - (i) Ongoing, robust family and community involvement.**
 - (ii) Intra- or inter-district or regional coordination.**
 - (iii) Cross-agency collaboration, such as with housing or transportation authorities.**
 - (iv) Alignment with an existing public diversity plan or diversity needs assessment.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how the project will address Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting equity in student access to educational resources, and opportunities. (a)(1) The applicant demonstrates that it has always prioritized culturally responsive and equitable family, school, and community engagement. The equity approach promotes the following: strategies to increase outreach to diverse communities to establish common ground; voices from within each community as a source of expertise; identification and removal of cultural biases that hinder academic achievement; and a new definition of family engagement that reflects and includes communities of color. The proposed project will work across all education settings with a focus on underserved youth and families and on transitions to elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and career (pgs. 10-12).

(b)(1)(2) The project is designed to establish, expand, or improve the engagement of underserved community members. The project will work with stakeholders to identify and dismantle inequitable practices and policies that harm underserved families. The project will work to finalize and implement statewide (Maryland; Pennsylvania) family engagement frameworks with an emphasis on identifying strategies that will improve the engagement of underserved community

members. The project will utilize CAFE's recent toolkit, 21st Century Learning at Home: A guide for Families and Caregivers of English Learners to Support Project-Based, Deeper Learning at Home (English/Spanish). The project will host Communities of Practice (CoPs) to implement strategic equity plans and evidence-based engagement practices. The applicant has a plan in Pennsylvania to work across agencies and community-based organizations to pilot parent liaisons across 29 Intermediate Units (regional districts) (pgs. 10-12).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4--Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to take a systemic approach to improving outcomes for underserved students in the following priority area:

(a) Establishing cross-agency partnerships, or community-based partnerships with local nonprofit organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, or others, to meet family well-being needs.

Strengths:

The applicant provides a detailed plan to address Competitive Preference Priority 4: Strengthening cross-agency coordination and community engagement. For example, the applicant seeks to improve outcomes of all underserved student populations in Maryland and Pennsylvania by strengthening cross-agency collaboration with key stakeholders to meet family needs and produce student success. CAFÉ create organizational and systemic collaboration to increase collective and equitable impact and to improve student outcomes. A network of community members, organizations, and institutions can collaborate to advance equity and to achieve systems-level change (Kania et al., 2021). CAFÉ will remove siloed events and promote sustainability through systemic partnerships, targeted interventions, strategies, and analysis. The proposed project will focus on equitable family engagement practices, family leadership initiatives, and socio-emotional learning strategies. The applicant provides a comprehensive chart of targeted and systemic projects, including selected projects by objective, title, target audience, educational level, background, anticipated outcomes, and alignment with the Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs) (pgs. 12; 14-18).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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Applicant: Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium Inc (S310A220038)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	24
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	18
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	19
Sub Total	80	75
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	89	84

Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - SFEC Tier 1 Panel - 3: 84.310A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium Inc (S310A220038)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. A. Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 points).

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

- (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.**
- (2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.**

Strengths:

- (1) To a great extent, the applicant discusses its conceptual framework providing the underpinning of this project. The project is well-explained to be based on four essential elements: culturally sustaining pedagogy, multi-directional practices, asset-based approach, and the collective benefits of family engagement (p. e20). Those elements are comprehensively explained with research evidence grounding their importance, i.e., culturally sustaining pedagogy recognizes diverse parents possess distinct assets that educators should seek to understand (supported with research of Kozleski & King-Thourius, 2014) (pp. e20-e21). A quality Logic Model also provides a systemic approach to how the applicant has formed its project, i.e., inputs, activities, outputs, short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes (pp. e62-e63). This framework and the thorough Logic Model form the foundation of this project that will address the consequences of underserved students and families who have experienced concentrated poverty and inequities in learning. (p. e21).
- (2) Up-to-date knowledge from research of best practices for parental involvement, student achievement, and cultural diversity is evident in the project design and foundation. For example, the avenues to increase high-impact family and community engagement and improve student academic and personal well-being in low-performing schools is based on several pieces of research including that of Mapp & Bergman in 2021 and Jacques & Villegas in 2018 (p. e22). The research is well explained for its significance to this project, i.e., how the most effective schools view parents and families as crucial assets, leaders, and experts when it comes to their children's educational needs (research of Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Ishimaru, et al., 2018; and Maier et al., 2017) (p. e22). Other up-to-date research evidence informs this project in the areas of home visits by educators, the utilization of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams, and the implementation of the Ready4K Trauma-Informed Program (Sussman, 2021) (pp. e23-e24). To a significant extent, the applicant well-forms its project design upon high quality research evidence for effective parental, community, and school engagement processes to increase student achievement and enhance the educators' relationships with families.
- (3) To some extent, the applicant describes how its project will build capacity and yield results after the conclusion of this project. Examples include having a Project Goal 1 address the planning for sustaining the statewide family engagement efforts (p. e323), a project milestone being created to sustain partnerships developed for use in this project (p. e786) and assigning the Senior Education Equity Specialist the tasks of developing family engagement activities that can be sustained after the grant cycle (p. e788). These elements are the beginning stage of having a clear sustainability plan for this project.

Weaknesses:

(3) The applicant does not provide a complete plan for sustaining the essential elements of this project. Greater depth of strategies is needed to demonstrate that the applicant is not just in the designing phase of a sustainability plan. More details need to be seen for how the applicant will utilize public or private funding and in-kind funding for the piece of the project that might need funding, such as technical assistance to families and communities (p. e24). Specificity is needed for how this project will be continued so that assurance of sustainability is apparent.

Reader's Score: 24

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**1. B. Quality of the Management Plan (up to 20 points).**

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

- (1) The 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.**
- (2) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**
- (3) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project.**
- (4) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**
- (5) How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

(1) The applicant provides a clear and comprehensive management work plan for Project Years 1-5 and contains project milestones/main tasks, project goals/objectives, personnel/entities to implement each activity, and a logical frequency of the activities per project year (pp. e37-e40). The duties of each staff person and partner are well-detailed in the management plan. A clearly stated example is In Project Year 1, "Establish cross-organizational committees to promote sharing of information which aligns to Milestone for the Collaborative Action for Family Engagement will act as a coordinating hub for regional and statewide family engagement efforts by State Education Agencies (SEAs) by creating and sustain partnerships and leveraging network expertise." This milestone is clearly linked to Goal 1: Objectives 1 and 2 and will be implemented by the Project Manager, partners, and State Education Agencies of Maryland and Pennsylvania (p. e38).

A full discussion is presented to demonstrate that the applicant has fiscal controls in place to constantly monitor the project's budget and implement the program with fiscal confidence. Accounting systems are in place managing finances, budgets, and implementing a three-point checking system to ensure transparency, accuracy, and budget compliance (p. e52). The Project Director has one duty that includes managing the budgetary functions for this project (p. e835). The

workplan is well-designed and complete with activities to achieve all the stated project goals and cause the project to be implemented on time and within budget (pp. e35-e36).

(2) A convincing discussion is presented for the adequacy of the feedback and how it will lead to continuous improvement. Quality processes include the utilization of the Continuous Improvement for Equity systemic approach to tackle educational inequities and collect, analyze, and disaggregate data to make informed decisions for student academic improvement and the formation and implementation of the Project Advisory Committees (p. e41, e341-e344). Clear details are shown that feedback about the project services and resources will be given by parents, families, project staff, school personnel, students, and partners via surveys and interviews (pp. e40-e41). These strategies will ensure some clear feedback about the movement of the project towards its goals and objectives.

(3) Several methods to ensure that the project's activities are of high-quality are provided. All product and services will undergo a quality review using the most recent research standards for accessibility and instructional design (p. e42). Prior to the release of publications, the Mid Atlantic Equity Consortium's key leadership team, Advisory Committee members, and content experts will review the materials for accuracy and content value (p. e42). Quality of project services will be gauged through satisfaction surveys and client interviews who have participated in the services (p. e42). These quality-ensuring strategies will give greater assurance to the validity, fidelity, and usefulness of the project's materials, resources, and presentations.

(4) The applicant well-details appropriate project time allocation for its full-time key personnel including the Family Engagement Specialist who will be serving in a 1.0 FTE allocation in this project (p. e43). The duties of this position are shown to be best suited to a full-time position, i.e., serving as liaison to their state and providing technical assist and training to educators, families, partner staff, and community-based organizations (p. e43). The other key position has an appropriate project time allotment, i.e., the Senior Family Engagement Specialist at 1.0 FTE (p. e835). The applicant's thorough description of key personnel roles and project time commitments will lead to a well-organized and beneficial training process for the project's participants.

(5) A diversity of measures is presented to demonstrate that the applicant will utilize a variety of methods in achieving a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of this project, i.e., planning and evaluation meetings of the Advisory Council for each state (p. e43). Quality measures include establishing the Pennsylvania Advisory Council and the Maryland Advisory Council with a broad representation of voices joining the applicant, i.e., more than 50% parents, the Project Director, an educator, a partner representative, an educational expert in the field of parent engagement, and representatives of the non-profit sector (pp. e341-344).

The applicant's attention to including a wide diversity of voices will create project strategies and products that will better meet the needs of the families, schools, educators, students, and community organizations to increase effective family engagement activities.

Weaknesses:

(2) (5) The Advisory Committees in each state do not contain any students. It is important to have a diversity of feedback and perspectives to bear upon the continuous review of this project. The youth are beneficiaries of the project and need experiences in voicing their concerns and praises of the project's successes and barriers while the adults on the committees are voicing their opinions. With this type of interaction, young people will learn how to interact for policy and process changes (pp. e341-e344).

(4) There is a lack of reasonableness of the time commitment of the Project Director, who is stated to have .80 FTE allocation to this project. Considering the project will be serving over 3,000 diverse stakeholders and thousands of students/families in the two states of Maryland and Pennsylvania, it is not clear how the Project Director would perform all the expected duties and form the necessary relationships with states, community-based organizations, LEAs, and partners with less than a 1.0 FTE time allocation to this project (pp. e42, e835).

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. C. Project Personnel (up to 15 points).

The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, in determining the quality of the management plan and project personnel, the Secretary considers the following factors--

- (1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.
- (2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.
- (3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant details the high-quality of education of the designated Project Director. The applicant also explains how this individual has adequate training and relevant career experiences for the leadership of this project, i.e., the individual serves as the Program Director for the Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center (p. e44). The individual has attained a Master's in Education (M.A.Ed.) in Curriculum and Instruction, earned the designation as a Donovan Scholar with a focus on Urban Education, and a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree in Educational Psychology (p. e44). The designed Project Director has career experiences in directing a summer program at a public charter school in an urban area, leading a Maryland Family Engagement Summit, presenting at other conferences on the topic of family engagement, and serving as Associate Director at the Harlem Education Activities Fund (pp. e44, e796). The Project Director has the high-quality education and career experiences to successfully lead this project and guide the project to achieve its outcomes.

(2) The applicant demonstrates high-quality education and career experiences for the other key project position of Senior Family Engagement Specialist (pp. e44-e45). The individual holds a bachelor's in Early Childhood Education (p. e44). The Senior Family Engagement Specialist is a current staff member at the Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center (p. e44). The applicant has demonstrated that the key personnel have quality educational backgrounds and relevant career experiences to successfully perform their assigned project duties to assist in implementing this project with fidelity to the project goals and objectives.

(3) The qualifications, relevant training, and experiences of the subcontractors are well-detailed, i.e., to National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement; WestED; and Parents as Teachers (pp. e46-e48). All these entities have purposes and missions centered on families' and children's best welfare and academic successes, i.e., the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement has been in operation for ten years and focuses on outreach and technical assistance for families and communities as they address systemic challenges and the need for improvement in student achievement and positive child development (p. e46). The Parents' Place of Maryland is a parent training center which focuses on children's health care needs and children with disabilities (p. e47). The prior successful experiences of these subcontractors will provide a great assurance of a well-designed and implemented project as they train educators, community members, and parents.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide clear details of a project employee or a process to actively recruit persons from underrepresented populations to apply for the project's job vacancies. Information is not shown that encouragement will

be offered to members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. Without a designated project personnel position implementing specific strategies to recruit applications from the underrepresented populations, no assurance is given that these populations will be given consideration for employment in this project and equity within the project staff is not demonstrated (p. e44).

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. D. Adequacy of Resources (up to 20 points).

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

(1) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.

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

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits.

Strengths:

(1) Both the relevance and level of project commitment are fully discussed for each of the seven project partners across the two states of Maryland and Pennsylvania, including both states' departments of education, a national community engagement association, a national/regional comprehensive education laboratory and equity center, a parent training center, and a center for early childhood education (pp. e49-e51). The applicant demonstrates in Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the applicant and each partner the roles and commitment of the partners which are diversified to blend the varied resources of those entities to positively impact the success of the project's implementation and outreach to low-income students and families, and early childhood learners (pp. e78-e107). Each partner's role is well-detailed in the MOU, i.e., Parent as Teachers agrees to provide technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs to implement effective policies, programs, and activities to lead to improving students' development and academic achievement and make staff available to this project (p. e182). Partners include the Maryland State Department of Education, the Parents as Teachers, WestEd, and Parent Powered (pp. e49-e51). The quality of experiences that each partner will bring to this project will ensure successful outcomes for this project.

(2) Reasonableness is demonstrated in all the proposed costs for the project for each of the five years and the Budget contains clear identification of the item(s), categories of expenses, cost estimates for all five project years, alignment to the project's significance and project's objectives, and summary of calculation methodology (pp. e53, e834-884). Examples of reasonableness includes the line item of Contractual Expenses for a five-year total of \$1,708,827 (to National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement; WestED; and Parents as Teachers) and the Personnel line items for a total of \$1,627,880 being defined by employee title, appropriate salary level, and FTE units appropriate to assigned positions (pp. e838-e840, e837, e83).

The applicant's Budget shows it plans to devote the obligatory 65% of the Budget to serve schools and community agencies that serve disadvantaged students (high poverty, English Language Learners, ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, homeless children, migrants, and foster care children) (p. e834) and has allocated 46%, of the project funds for activities for evidence-based parent education, which is well above the obligatory 30% (p. e835). These allocations of funds indicate the applicant has an emphasis upon serving disadvantaged students and their parents in increasing

academic achievement.

The project's matching funds of \$69,869 annually for each of the five project years are well-defined and demonstrate a potential positive significance of the project's ownership by the applicant and other private entities (pp. e842-e884). For example, the partner, WestEd will be providing in-kind technical assistance services for the capacity building of teachers to engage families in student learning goals, capacity building of school principals in family engagement practices, technical assistance to families/parents for creating a systemic process for family partnerships with schools, and providing a Kick-Off meeting for the project (p. 839) This large matching funding demonstrates the strong commitments from numerous partners to this proposed project and increased parental engagement in education.

(3) Project costs are somewhat explained to be reasonable in relation to the large number of LEAs, schools, and students that will be beneficiaries of the project services, i.e., LEAs and schools in four regions in Maryland and six regions in Pennsylvania (pp. e16, e54). The applicant also estimates a significant project-impact upon disadvantaged children and youth, who are impoverished, multi-lingual, and/or students with disabilities (p. e54).

The applicant partially describes that the costs are reasonable in relation to anticipated results and benefits. The results and benefits include reduction of barriers to family engagement through policy development, increased parent leadership in educational roles, and refined educational practices within LEAs practices that support family engagement (p. e50). To some extent, the applicant well-details that the reasonableness of the project costs and the relationship of the costs to create and implement family engagement processes which will benefit the students, educators, and parents.

Weaknesses:

(3) There is ambiguity in the expected results and benefits of this project to the target student population. The applicant does not provide clear indication of the extent of student impact and benefits of its project, i.e., in the Abstract, the applicant states this project will reach 770 schools, but in the Narrative, the applicant states it plans to reach 4,521 schools in Pennsylvania and Maryland with its project (pp. e16, e54). Without a more accurate estimate of the expected number of persons to be served in this project, it is difficult to ascertain the level of anticipated results and benefits for the students in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Reader's Score: 19

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2-- Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students (as defined in the notice inviting applications, NIA) and the educators who serve them, through one or more of the following priority areas:

(a) Conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families.

(b) Providing resources and supports to meet the basic, fundamental, health and safety needs of students and educators.

(c) Addressing students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic need through approaches that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status.

Strengths:

(a)(b) The applicant well-explains that it will conduct asset mapping for the students' disengagement from education and schools and a community mapping of assets to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and community-based organization in assist teacher wellness, student wellness, and academic performance of students (p. e28). Specificity is noted for the plan to include the Ready4K partner to provide parents with the trauma-informed family engagement curriculum which will be beneficial to families whose students have high anxiety and depression from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic (p. e28). In addition, the Collaborative Action for Family Engagement Center will continue to provide webinars, workshops, and Communities of Practices for three educators to address the long-term effects of COVID-19 (p. e28). This organization will publish in collaboration with both SEAs and the Project Advisory Committees a guide for keeping schools open safety during the pandemic (p. e28). These strategies to identify the educators' and students' impact of COVID-19 and services for the impacts already recognized will be beneficial elements to the project's participants.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3--Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources, and Opportunities (up to 3 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it 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-school-time settings.**
- (7) Alternative schools and programs.**
- (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and**
- (9) Adult learning.**

(b) That is designed to examine the sources of inequities related to, and implement responses through, one or more of the following:

- (1) 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 and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives)).

(2) Increasing student racial or socioeconomic diversity, through developing or implementing evidence-based policies or strategies that include one or more of the following:

- (i) Ongoing, robust family and community involvement.**
- (ii) Intra- or inter-district or regional coordination.**
- (iii) Cross-agency collaboration, such as with housing or transportation authorities.**
- (iv) Alignment with an existing public diversity plan or diversity needs assessment.**

Strengths:

(a) (1-6, 9) The applicant provides clear details that its project will promote equity and adequacy of resources for targeted students/families. A clear and viable plan is presented with four succinct strategies for being culturally responsive in the approach to equitable family, school, and community engagement in education. The strategies include increasing outreach to diverse communities to establish common understandings about family engagement and education, and identification/removal of cultural biases that hinder academic achievement of students and a new definition of family engagement that reflect and include communities of color (pp. e28-e29). These opportunities will be given to students in four regions in Maryland and six regions in Pennsylvania (p. e16). Quality details are provided to demonstrate that the applicant plans to provide activities for underserved students in all grade levels in schools and for families at home, i.e., PreK-grade 12 and postsecondary (college and career) (pp. e32, e303-e305).

(b)(1) The applicant clearly describes its efforts in increasing the engagement of underserved parents in engaging in education issues. Methods will include to provide English Language Learners and their families resources for better learning English in their homes and translating project materials and resources into their languages (p. e29). Another key strategy will be the applicant hosting Communities of Practice to implement equity plans and build family leaders in diverse school communities, i.e., pilot partner liaisons across 29 Intermediate Units to bring those parents' voices to the table for decision making (p. e30). It is important to intentionally plan for bringing new dimensions of parent leadership into the schools and communities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4--Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change (up to 3 points).

Projects that are designed to take a systemic approach to improving outcomes for underserved students in the following priority area:

(a) Establishing cross-agency partnerships, or community-based partnerships with local nonprofit organizations, businesses, philanthropic organizations, or others, to meet family well-being needs.

Strengths:

To a great extent, the applicant demonstrates plans to establish cross-agency partnerships with other agencies and to form community-based partnerships to meet the needs of the families. Partnerships include community-based organizations, county-level governmental agencies, state level governmental organizations for the homeless, regional, and local groups that form Communities of Practice (p. e31). Examples of entities that will form a bond with the applicant during this project to systemically meet the needs of educators and underserved children include early childhood centers, the areas Community Action Partnerships, counties' departments of health/human services, and universities (pp. e31-e32). These extended project partnerships will provide valuable and meaningful collaborations for both providing services to the project and families and for insight into effective practices to involve more community members to strengthen the educational engagement activities in the communities.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: **3**

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