

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/27/2022 04:29 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Center for Families Learning (S310A220050)

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	19
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	18
Sub Total	80	76
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	85

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: National Center for Families Learning (S310A220050)

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 clear conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework. The project design is informed by lessons learned from implementing the current SFEC grant and NCFL's leadership and partnerships on three other SFECs as well as from its co-leadership of the National SFEC Network. This Network is a community of practice that promotes knowledge-sharing and collaboration between the 12 current SFEC grantees. The applicant provides key lessons learned that inform the conceptual framework. First of all, the Family Literacy model (FLM) is an evidence-based program that addresses learning recovery and information and technology inequities in the NEE SFEC's COVID-19 response for families. The NEE SFEC can have a greater impact across the state by integrating with the NCCFF's Community Well-being Initiative – Bring Up Nebraska (BUN), which was established as a community response to COVID-19. A strong lesson learned was that student, family, and educator social, emotional, and mental health should be prioritized. Another lesson learned is that more opportunities were needed that extend learning beyond school walls. The applicant describes how the theory of action and logic model provide a conceptual framework that aligns with The U.S. Department of Education's Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships. The logic model describes enabling conditions, levels of impact, objectives, activities, outputs, and increased/enhanced outcomes. The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how each of the four (4) objectives and activities reflect the Dual Capacity-Building Framework's conditions on how they are aligned to learning; relational; collaborative; interactive; and focused on the development of schools, families, and communities. The applicant provides a visual representation of the objectives and how partners will work together through each level of the NEE FEC system in the Appendix (pgs. 3-21; e71).

(2) The applicant describes comprehensive services to be provided by the proposed project that reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. The applicant demonstrates that the continuation of the proposed NEE SFEC reflects the evidence-based strategies that have been identified before and during the pandemic as necessary to support learning recovery of underserved students through equitable family, school, and community engagement. The NEE SFEC will offer TTA, Professional Development, and programming that is responsive to educators, students, and parents. The continuum of offerings is aligned with many of the essential conditions and program goals outlined by the U. S. Department of Education's Dual Capacity-Building Framework (pgs. 21-22).

(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 applicant demonstrates that almost 70% of existing NEE SFEC FLMs implemented over the past four years have achieved sustainability through the existing grant's tiered funding model for LEAs, which provide higher funding in the first two years of program development to cover one-time expenditures necessary for program operations. These expenditures, along with TTA and coaching costs, decrease over a period of three years as those individuals managing the budget gradually add the lower-annual program cost into their district budgets. The expansion of TTA to all 19 ESUs builds internal capacity and transfers knowledge using a train-the-trainer approach. This approach increases the number of stakeholders served, resulting in more families, individuals, institutions, and agencies that are learning, practicing, and adopting educational practices. The applicant describes its fiscal sustainability as the NEE SFEC will intentionally transition full responsibility of its long-term operations to statewide organization and current NEE SFEC partner, the NCCF. The NCCF is Nebraska's leading organization supporting family and child well-being statewide with net assets of \$41,001,020 (Guidestar, 2021). The inclusion of the NEE SFEC into NCCF's BUN will facilitate visibility and opportunities for sustainable support in-state (pgs. 23-24).

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 comprehensive 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

applicant aligns each of the four (4) objectives, activities, partners, and timeline (year). The applicant provides a method of evaluation timeline, aligning the level (state and regional level, community/district-level, school-level, families, and students), to the construct, measure, person(s) responsible, and timeline (when). The applicant provides a timeline for continuous improvement mechanisms, aligning the frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually) to the scale, procedure, and the stakeholders involved. The applicant provides a detailed organizational chart for the proposed project. The applicant describes the roles and responsibilities of the key project personnel. The Project Director will provide leadership and fiscal oversight of the grant, serve as the main point of contact with the United States Department of Education, and ensure overall project quality and continuous improvement. The State Director will work collaboratively with partner leads to support the special advisory committee; oversee and drive regional TTA training development and delivery: support strategic NE SFEC communication and publications; and on evaluation activities (pgs. 24-25; e150-e151).

(2) The applicant describes clear procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. The applicant provides a timeline for continuous improvement mechanisms, aligning the frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually) to the scale, procedure, and the stakeholders involved. The data will be reported frequently to allow for adjustments as needed throughout the five-year grant period. The NE SFEC will create processes for continuous improvement by implementing a four-step method created by Delivery Associates (DA), a global firm specializing in helping improve social impact through strong implementation (pgs. 26-27).

(3) The applicant describes clear mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project. The applicant describes the following three key mechanism for ensuring high-quality products and services that are in place: practices are grounded in research and evidence; ongoing professional learning and implementation support for those delivering products and services; and independent evaluation informing implementation. The Project Director and staff will work closely with state partners and the SAC to drive routine check-ins with qualitative and quantitative data. Using this data will help to build internal and external visibility, evidence-based policy, and trust among stakeholders (pgs. 27-28).

(4) The applicant clearly describes time commitments of the project director and other key project personnel that are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant provides a clear Nebraska SFEC organization structure with the time commitments for key personnel. The time commitments include: SFEC Project Director (.30 FTE), SFEC State Director (1.0 FTE), Family Learning Specialist (1.0 FTE), Family Learning Specialist (1.0 FTE), Administrative Assistant (.25 FTE), Contract and Grants Administrator (.50 FTE), Family Leadership Consulting (.20 FTE), Family Learning Consulting (.20 FTE), and Family Engagement Consulting (.20 FTE) (pgs. 28-29).

(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, and a variety of disciplinary and professional fields. The NE SFEC's collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education's (NE ED's) ESUs and BUN provides access to a diversity of perspectives statewide representing populations in urban, rural, and urban regions, LEAs, and various agencies and systems. These perspectives will be shared during the quarterly SAC meetings, the NE SFEC website, strategic communication to regional TTA hubs and local high-impact programming schools, and through NE SFEC publications including the Family Engagement Bright Spots report. The applicant demonstrates that parent leadership opportunities in different regions provide a pipeline for increased family input that can inform both local and state policies. NCFL has partnered with the NE ED and NCFF on previous education initiatives for over a decade. The applicant describes the diversity of perspectives in NE SFEC Special Advisory Committee, with more than 50% parent representation from 13 NE SFEC Family Literacy programs, including parents with children with disabilities, English Language Learners, and disadvantaged families. The Special Advisory Committee will also include the following representation: youth/family engagement and out-of-school time representation from statewide and local nonprofit organizations, the University of Nebraska (higher education), Nebraska's Education Service Delivery units, Nebraska Department of Education (NE ED) (family and community engagement, early childhood), NE SFEC region (local business), philanthropic representation (Buffet Institute), the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and the Nebraska Department of Labor (pgs. 29-31).

Weaknesses:

- (1) No weaknesses were noted.
- (2) No weaknesses were noted.
- (3) No weaknesses were noted.
- (4) No weaknesses were noted.
- (5) The applicant does not include beneficiaries of services, such as students, in the diversity of perspectives. It is important to receive input from students because their voices can inform both local and state policies.

Reader's Score: 19

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 clearly describes the qualifications of the full-time 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 qualifications: Doctor of Education (Ed.D). in Instruction and Administration, Superintendent Certification; over two decades of experience in teaching and learning, Family Engagement (FE) in education, and innovation and equity in P-20 education. As a senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Project Director helped to shape and to reimagine the Foundation's K-12 education investment portfolio focused on place-based strategies for education leadership and advancing college and career ready efforts, P-20 (pgs. 31-32; e128-e135).

(2) The applicant thoroughly describes the relevant qualifications of each of the key project personnel to be used in the project, including formal training and work experience in fields related to the objectives of the project. The applicant describes the relevant qualifications of the following key personnel: NCFE partner lead, State Director, NE ED Lead, Evaluation liaison, Connected Youth Initiative Lead, and Community liaison and convener. The applicant describes their current position, training, experience, and provides their resumes in the Appendix which is adequate (pgs. 32-34; e106-e128).

(3) The applicant describes the qualifications, including the relevant training and experience of project consultants or subcontractors. For example, the NE SFEC consultants and contractors have submitted preliminary Memorandums of

Understanding (MOUs) as well as Letters of Support for this application. The applicant indicates that all 12 LEA partners participating in the NE SFEC current grant have provided letters of support for this application. The applicant provides the sufficient qualifications of the following partners: The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, The Nebraska Department of Education (NE ED), and an evaluator (pgs. 34-36; e73-e80).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how the applicant institution employs personnel who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented. The applicant does not describe how the applicant institution 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.

(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 demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. The applicant describes the commitments of the following partners including a signed Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) and the Nebraska Department of Education (NE ED). The applicant describes the key contributions of the following partners: National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), Nebraska State Department of Education (NE ED), new LEA Partner Sites, and the Evaluator which are clear and concise (pgs. 34-37; e73-e80; e136-e138; e149-e157).

(2) The applicant describes costs 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 four objectives, resulting in programs that vary in scope, intensity, and duration. The budget is reasonable and includes the following federal funds: \$748,072.63 (Year 1), \$912,929.92 (Year 2), \$924,370.49 (Year 3), \$924,721.00 (Year 4), \$661,933.67 (Year 5), for a total 5-year cost of \$4,072,027.79. The applicant adequately describes the non-federal funds for the NE SFEC program for a total of \$129,990 for the 5-year grant period (pgs. 1; 36-37; e149-

e157).

(3) The applicant describes costs that are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits. The number of participants to be served through high-quality training and technical assistance (TTA) is 4,400 families, practitioners, school leaders, educators, parent facilitators, and agency representatives. The number of participants to be served through high-impact programs is 6,235 families at 16 proposed sites. The proposed project will reach approximately 10,635 people. The estimated \$77 per person investment will contribute to a sustainable system. The budget fulfills the funding requirements to spend not less than 65% each fiscal year to serve Local Education Agencies (LEAs), schools, and community-based organizations that serve high concentrations of disadvantaged students (pgs. 37-38; e14).

Weaknesses:

(1) No weaknesses were noted.

(2) The applicant does not provide the specific line items for the salaries of each of the personnel. Providing the salaries as a total line item cost does not allow for the assessment of the reasonableness of each salary.

(3) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 18

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)(c) The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how the project will address Competitive Preference Priority 2: Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and faculty. For example, the partners in the proposed project, The Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center (NE SFEC), will provide technical assistance and coaching for Special Advisory Committee (SAC) members conducting community asset mapping to identify and disseminate resources at local, regional, and state levels to support COVID-19 learning response and recovery. The

community asset mapping efforts will extend beyond the academics to capture all of the needs of students, families and educators. The project will be guided by the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families approach, which outlines Five Protective Factors to increase family well-being: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, social-emotional competence, and concrete supports (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2018). The SAC, which operates on a statewide level, will work directly with the Bring Up Nebraska (BUN) initiative to gather and interpret data from its 22 local community collaboratives. The SAC and BUN will create new resources while advocating for policy change to address needs statewide. The findings forming the asset mapping will identify the gaps and the emerging needs of families through collective community impact. The project will disseminate new information, resources, and recommendations through a strategic communications campaign statewide by the committee and through the Statewide Family engagement Center (SFEC) digital infrastructure. The outreach efforts will be translated into multiple languages for access by families and be available in digital and print formats to allow for equitable access of information (pgs. 17-18).

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) The proposed project is designed to promote equity in the 13 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) where Family Literacy Models (FLMs) were launched in 2018. Three existing FLM sites will promote an increased level of skill-building, parent voice, and participation in local, regional and state policy conversations. The proposed project will be expanded into all 19 Nebraska Educational Service Units (NE ESU) and will focus on the expansion of three new high-impact FLM program sites in schools demonstrating the highest needs across the state. These areas are located in three of the five BUN collaboratives that are participating in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Thriving Families Network. These five counties have lower high school graduation rates, higher juvenile arrest rates, lower percentages of English Language Arts testing proficiency, and a greater percentage of children under age 5 below the poverty level. Residents in these counties represent a higher diversity of ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds (pgs. 18-20).

(b)(1)(2) The project is designed to establish, expand, and improve 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, and State level. The project will examine inequities related to increasing student racial or socioeconomic diversity. The applicant describes the following practices that will be developed during the NE SFEC program, including co-creation (promotes parent leadership in local communities), inclusive practices for families to mitigate barriers to participation, and immersive education a continuum of services, including technology, focused on supporting families with middle and high school students (pgs. 18-19).

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:

(a) The applicant provides a clear plan to address Competitive Preference Priority 4: Strengthening cross-agency coordination and community engagement. For example, the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) will strengthen its cross-agency coordination through its integration with Nebraska's Department of Education ESUs and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF's) BUN. This coordination allows many state systems to collaborate in infrastructure enhancement. The BUN collaborators include: The Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska, The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation (pgs. 20-21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Center for Families Learning (S310A220050)

Reader #2: *****

	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	18
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	18
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: National Center for Families Learning (S310A220050)

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 several essential elements including lessons learned from the applicant's current Statewide Family Engagement Center Grant project, the best program practices of several family engagement state and national organizations, and the best practices developed and implemented through the Nebraska Department of Education (p. e23). The applicant well-details the past learning experiences in developing this project from entities with evidence-based (Family Literacy Project) and most effective strategies that include the National Center for Families Learning and the Nebraska Child and Families Foundation (p. e23). Lessons Learned are clearly shown to impact this project, such as the need to align this project with the U.S. Department of Education's Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships for systemic changes developed by the research work of Mapp and Kuttner, 2013) (p. e26).

A quality Logic Model also provides a systemic approach to how the applicant has formed its project, i.e., Enabling Conditions, Levels of Impact, Activities, Outputs, and Increased-Enhanced Outcomes for students, parents, families, school educators, and student academic achievement (p. e26). The Enabling Conditions are well-explained to be the beginning points of the Model and include what learnings and strategic changes are imperative to this project, i.e., Shifting of mindsets by changing the narrative of working with and alongside families (p. e26). These lessons learned and the Project 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. e26).

(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 also improve student academic and personal well-being in low-performing schools is based on several pieces of research including that of Mapp & Kuttner's 2013 research (Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family Engagement) (p. e41). The applicant clearly discusses the importance of this research to the families' support/engagement in education and the increasing of students' academic performance (p. e41). Other research informing this project includes the Study of Social Policy from the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Network (p. e42). This research study is well-explained to identify the essential five protective factors that support a child's success (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2018) (p. e42). Research includes studies of the benefits

of immersive education in middle and high school programs as those programs promoted educational equity and social-emotional learning (Guest, S. A. P. (2021) Empowering Equity in Education with Virtual Reality and Immersive Learning; The Effectiveness of Virtual Reality Soft Skills Training in the Enterprise: A Study) (p. e139). 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 implementing a fiscal model for this project which gradually decreases the need for Federal grant dollars to supply the financial assistance for program elements (Personnel) with the local school districts adding costs into their district budgets in a progressive manner to assume most of the costs by the end of the grant (p. e43). Another viable sustainability strategy is implementing a train-the-trainer model for the technical assistance and professional development of community agencies and schools (p. e43). This model will give great benefit to the recipients of these service while reducing future fiscal outlays for contractors to present the family engagement trainings (p. e43). In addition, the program elements are progressively being distributed to the fiscal agents of Nebraska instead of utilizing Federal dollars to sustain the project including project costs being transferred after the grant cycle to the Nebraska Department of Education and/or the project partner Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (p. e43). Clarity of this process is shown with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation increasing its matching fiscal commitment to this project with annual monetary contributions, ranging from \$150,000 in Project Year 1 to \$250,000 in Project Year 5 (p. e154). These elements clearly demonstrate a viable plan to sustain the family engagement strategies beyond this grant cycle.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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 provides a clear and comprehensive management work plan for Project Year 1-5 which contains project objectives, activities, personnel/entities to implement each activity, and a logical frequency of the activities on an annual basis (pp. e44-e47). An example is in Project Year 3, 3.1 "Milestone Activity Implement Family Literacy Model Programs with 13 existing Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center sites and adding three new sites to be implemented by the local school districts and the National Center for Families Learning" (p. e45). This activity is well-explained to align with Project Objective 3: Provide high impact family engagement services and programs (pre-school through adulthood) (p. e45).

A partial discussion is presented to demonstrate that the applicant has fiscal controls in place for this project. The applicant states that the Project Director will have fiscal oversight of this grant for the grant period (p. e150). Having a designated project employee assigned to leadership in the fiscal matters of the project is one element to ensure the project will be kept within budget.

(2) The applicant provides clear discussion for a process of collecting and analyzing feedback in a process for continuous improvement of its project. Quality processes include weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually frequencies of local, national, and statewide feedback into this project's strategies (pp. e46-e47). Examples include weekly meetings at the statewide level for team meetings to review timely information, plan, and prioritize daily operations and management of the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) and will be implemented by applicant (Nebraska SFEC staff) (p. e46). Of importance, is that the applicant includes over 50% parents on the Advisory Council (p. e50). Having parents be a majority of voices on the Council gives greater significance to their viewpoints in what will be most beneficial to their children/youth in the areas of education and wellbeing. The process of using a continuous feedback loop for improvement is well-detailed to be based on the model from Delivery Associates, a global firm specializing in implementing social projects with strong structures to equip teams with elements to make needing ongoing adjustments to projects (p. e46). These strategies will promote a process to have a quality feedback loop for continuous project improvement.

(3) Several evidence-based methods to ensure that the project's activities are of high-quality are provided. Key products and services that have a design to ensure high-quality for the recipients include development of activities that are developed and tested by research studies (example: the National Center for Families Learning's 4-component family literacy model meets the U. S. Department of Education's standard for an intervention demonstrating moderate evidence) (p. e47). Also, all project staff will have access to ongoing professional learning to acquire new knowledge, leadership, and facilitation skills to provide the most current and effective family engagement practices (p. e48). Quality preparation of the presenters, trainers, and advisors and design of quality resources and products are essential to maintain a high-quality program of best practices in increasing family and community engagement in the education systems in the state.

(4) The applicant well-details appropriate project time allocation for some of its key project personnel, Project Manager at .30 FTE, State-Based Director at 1.0 FTE, and two Family Learning Specialists at a total of 1.5 FTE to lead the work of this project (p. e48). The roles and responsibilities of these project positions well-align to the time allotments, i.e., the Project Director providing the project's overall leadership and ensuring quality and continuous improvement (p. e150). The roles of these positions and the time allotments align to lead to their tasks being able to be completed with fidelity.

(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 for urban, suburban, and rural areas/schools, such as i.e., quarterly meetings of the Special Advisory Committee (pp. e28, e49). Quality measures include establishing the Special Advisory Committee with a broad representation of voices joining the applicant, i.e., more than 50% parents from 13 Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center Family Literacy Programs who are parents are diverse in racial ethnicities and cultures and reside throughout the state who have students disengaged from learning including students may be disabled, English Language Learners, and/or disadvantaged (pp. e29, e50). Membership on the Committee will also include diverse perspectives from representatives of local nonprofit agencies that promote youth/family engagement, the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Education Service Delivery Units for Migrant Education, local businesses, early childhood centers, district level administrators, teachers, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services) (pp. e29, e50-e51).

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:

(1) The applicant does not detail the high-quality of the fiscal management processes that are in place to ensure that this project will fully be kept within its budget. Missing elements include processes for payroll, accounting processes following legal fiscal policies, separating this grant's financial records from other grants of the organization, or proper policies for procuring supplies and contractual services for this project (pp. e44, e150). Without greater depth of information, it is not possible to fully ensure that this applicant has described a full process to keep the project within the budget.

(5) The feedback cycle is not fully explained to contain any students within it. 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. With this type of interaction, young people will learn how to interact for policy and process changes (pp. e46-e47, e50-e51).

Reader's Score: 18

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 qualifications, relevant training, and expected career experiences of the Project Director are well-detailed (pp. e103-e105). Quality educational levels and career experiences include the project director attaining a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in School Superintendency and serving over 20 years in areas of education, such as Assistant Superintendent of Jefferson County Public Schools and as a current President of the National Center for Families Learning (pp. e103-e105). Such high quality and project-relevant education and career experiences will ensure the project will be implemented with fidelity to the grant initiative's purpose and the goals of the project.

(2) The applicant demonstrates high-quality education and career experiences for the other key project personnel including the State Level Director, the two Family Learning Specialists, the Family Engagement Consultation Support, the Family Literacy Consultation Support, and the Contracts and Grants Administrator (pp. e150-e151). Resumes and brief educational/career experience descriptions are provided for each of these positions (pp. e53-e54, e103-e135). All have attained university degrees, and all have numerous key experiences, including teaching in schools and universities, counseling, educational research, and public policy in the field of education. For example, the State Director has attained a master's degree in Child, Youth, and Family Studies, has served as a Civil Rights Investigator, and served as an

employee with the National Center for Families Learning for four years (p. e53). The applicant has established high-quality expectations for its project employees which will be added value in implementing this project with fidelity to the project goals.

(3) The experiences and qualifications of the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation are well-detailed to demonstrate that they will implement effective roles in this project. The Nebraska Department of Education's role includes assisting this project in selecting schools that will receive technical assistance (p. e137). The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's role in this project includes being the lead communicator and relationship-builder to connect the collaborating agencies and implementing the Connected Youth Initiative expansion (pp. e137). Both have foci on student academic achievement, family engagement in learning, and community/state engagement in positive public policymaking and meeting the needs of families and children. For example, the Nebraska Department of Education supports the applicant in its current Family Engagement Grant project and create and revise the Nebraska's statewide literacy plan and state level family engagement plans (p. e55). The experiences in effectively developing public policies and collaborating with school districts, educational foundations, and community agencies to promote family engagement in students' learning are well detailed. These details provide assurances that these subcontractors/consultants will add value to this project and assist the project in achieving its goals.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide clear details of a project employee or a process to actively encourage 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 candidates 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. e52).

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 two primary project partners across the nation and state, including a state-level governmental agency and a state level foundation (pp. e56, e78-e81). The applicant presents in a Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (pp. e78-e81) the diversified roles and commitments of the partners (pp. e78-e81). Partners include the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and the Nebraska State Department of Education (pp. e78-e81). The applicant and partners will blend their varied resources to positively impact the success of the project's implementation and outreach to educators in the state and low-income students and families, i.e., role of the Nebraska State Department of Education to provide Adult Education resources for

the continuing of education of families (pp. e78-e81, e137). Partners' experiences are well-detailed and relevant to this project such as the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation bringing 20 years of experience in serving as a parent resource center and hosting parent engagement projects across the state (p. e55).

Twelve Nebraska public school districts are also well-detailed to be partners in this project and have submitted Letters of Support for this project and address their experience as school districts in family engagement endeavors and their roles in this project. School partners include the Schuyler Community Schools, Madison Public Schools, and South Sioux City Community Schools (pp. e83-e102). The quality of experiences that each partner will bring to this project will ensure successful outcomes for this project.

(2) Reasonableness is demonstrated in most of the proposed costs for the project and the Budget contains clear identification of the item(s), categories of expenses, and cost estimates for all five project years aligning to the project's significance. An example of reasonableness is the cost of Supplies at a total five-year cost of \$61,000. Clarity is noted for the title of the items, estimate costs, and years of the costs, i.e., purchase of Family Literacy Kits at a unit cost of \$2,500 per item per year or an annual cost of \$7,500 in Project Years 2.5) (p. e153).

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 and has allocated 30% of the project funds for activities for evidence-based parent education (pp. e57, e149). The applicant provides comprehensive details in its Budget to indicate which line items will meet the thresholds for the services to disadvantaged students and evidence-based education, i.e., Contractual Costs of the Parent Leadership Resources at a cost of \$49,090 per year in project years 2-5 for the purpose of creating effective and evidence-based parent leadership programs in Local School Agencies that serve disadvantaged students (pp. e153-e154). These allocations of funds indicate the applicant has an emphasis upon serving disadvantaged students and their parents in increasing academic achievement.

The applicant states that it has matching funds for this project over the five years of the grant for a total of \$129,990 (p. e157). Some clarity of the matching funding description noted, including the National Center for Families Learning (the applicant) will provide a matching donation of in-kind services by dedicating 15% of the Project Director's time in Project Years 1-3, 10% in Year 4, and 5% in Year 5 (p. e150). This in-kind donation to this project demonstrates the strong partner commitment to this proposed project and increased involvement in enhancing parents' and communities' roles in education.

(3) Project costs (\$77 per person) are well-explained to be reasonable in relation to the 10,635 persons reached with the project's depth of services, i.e., including 4,400 families, practitioners, school leaders, educators, parent facilitators, and agency representatives (pp. e14, e57). The applicant also well-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 local school districts that support family engagement (p. e57). With the large numbers of parents, community agency personnel, and educators being impacted with this project, the costs are well-documented to be appropriate and reasonable. To a great 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:

(2) The applicant does not clearly show how it calculated each budget item. For example, for each personnel position, no salary level is provided, the position of Project Director is not associated with any cost estimate in addition to the stated total for all personnel for the project (p. e150). Furthermore, the applicant does not clearly show the calculation of its matching funds, i.e., lack of total dollars for each in-kind/monetary donation, such as for the partial salary of the Project Director in all project years. The dollar amount attributed to each personnel position with matching funds/in-kind donations is missing. Without greater specificity, it will be difficult to ascertain the costs being reasonable and in proper alignment to the project objectives and design (pp. 149-e150).

Reader's Score: 18

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' and educators' disengagement from education and schools with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic (p. e37). The asset mapping is well-described to include the identifying of the extent of educators' disengagement as they have dealt with social, emotional, and mental health issues, as well as these same issues being measured for the students (p. e24). Specificity is noted for the plan to include enhancing the approaches of the Community and Family Engagement Program (CAFE) which provides families an online "space" to learn from and support each other to better resolve the impacts of remote and/or hybrid learning established during the pandemic (p. e38). Also being extended as mitigation for COVID-19 are quality strategies of redesigned book distributions for students and distribution of Family Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Kits to assist families in teaching and guiding their children/youth in education (p. e50). 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)(b)(2)(i) 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 two succinct strategies for intensive inclusive practices targeted to specific geographical areas (p. e39). The applicant well-describes the characteristics of the families/students and the communities, such as being identified as a Thriving Family Community (includes Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and Dakota County schools/families) (p. e39). Those counties have underserved children and youth who have a higher diversity of ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds, have higher percentages of children under age 5 who identify as Black, Hispanic and/or as Native American, lower high school graduation rates, higher juvenile arrest rates, and high economic poverty (p. e39). 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.

(b)(1) Improvements to the existing family engagement plan includes well-explained and viable expansion of robust family and community involvement in community and school decision-making process. For example, families will engage in meeting conversations with representatives of the school, agencies, businesses, and local community to develop equitable family engagement policies and practices. The applicant indicates that families will be participants on the Special Advisory Committee (p. e40).

It is important to intentionally plan for bringing new dimensions of equity to the project's design so that emphasis of services and resources will be given to families with the greatest needs in the total process of increasing family engagement throughout the state.

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:

The applicant clearly details its plan to increase its cross-agency collaborations to strengthen cross-agencies partnership in improving outcomes for underserved students. Enhanced collaborations include the well-being initiative Bring Up Nebraska (pp. e25, e40). It involves a partnership of over 22 local communities' collaborations to address the needs of disadvantaged and underserved students and families of gaps in services for food insecurity, family well-being, digital divide, mental health (pp. e24, e40). In addition, education and economic/social/emotional outcomes will be improved for students with community-based partners providing free childcare, transportation, and language translation services so that students and parents can more fully participate in educational and wellbeing activities (p. e40). Collaborators for these efforts include the Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Administrative Office of Courts and Probation (pp. e40-e41). Strong cross-agency collaborations build the relationships of families and communities and best provide for students and families in a continuous pattern to bring the positive outcomes for basic needs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

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