

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:13 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	9
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	69
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	5
Total	77	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates the extent to which the proposed project will address student chronic absenteeism and disengagement by the proposed projects' multidisciplinary solutions . The proposed project is clearly built upon research based strategies. For example, "Check and Connect," a multi-disciplinary research-based program was found to have positive effects on staying in school. That intervention relies on mentor relationships and family engagement. (What Works Clearinghouse, May 2015) (Page e21 - e24 and e216) The proposed project will integrate these types of mentor relationships and family engagement efforts of the Check and Connect strategies and apply it to the Compass Care model which expands the use of Family Partners. The proposed project will be measuring the effects of these efforts on increased student and family engagement.

The proposed project is unique and promising as it includes the use of Family Partners who have relevant lived experiences. These Family Partners work with families through a ten-week concentrated intervention cycle. (Pages e21 - e24)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

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

Strengths:

The proposed project includes a conceptual framework that is clearly developed to reach students in seven middle and high schools across three states. The applicant has had partnerships with the three chosen local education agencies (LEA's). The project design will include oversight by an advisory council and a full-time family partner in each of the high need LEA's. The proposed project framework relies on the research regarding the efficacy of peer partners and natural supports to increase engagement. (Cutrona, et al. 2000) (Page e28 and Page e17)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly identifies stages of the proposed project. Those stages address the goals of the project. The applicant clearly defines several measurable objectives that are linked to measurable and specified outcomes. For example, in the outreach and onboarding stage, the objective to analyze student attendance data and create an outreach list will have the outcomes to enroll at least 10 families per school and 80% of those families completing the 10-week program cycle. (Pages e28 - e33)

The applicant includes a logic model that appropriately supports the goals, outputs and outcomes that clearly align with the objectives for the proposed project. For example, one of the proposed project's outcomes is to have families feel more connected to school and services through the implementation of the Compass Care program. (Page e126)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly identifies the needs of the target population. The needs include the high percentages of students in families that qualify for free/reduced lunch programs a high percentage of students of color and a high percentage of students who are chronically absent. The applicant will use a Youth Advisory Board as part of the planning process and use their input. The proposed project, Compass Care, will attempt to successfully address

Sub

the identified needs by providing a family partner, a team approach that includes Multisystem Therapy, and clear access to community services and resources. (Pages e22 - e25)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

Reader's Score: 9

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly defines how the organization prioritizes hiring and training staff from traditionally underrepresented groups. (page e35 and e208-e209)

The key project personnel include individuals who are highly trained and qualified. For example, the project director has experience in administration of large, multi-year federally-funded projects. (Page 33 and e53 - e55)

The regional directors demonstrate leadership and educational skills based on their relevant training and experiences. (Pages e33 - 34 and e56 - e74)

The applicant does include a well-defined job description for the Family Partner. This will assist in ensuring that those individuals will have relevant training and experience. (e75)

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant indicates that all agency staff is included in a two-week orientation and that Family Partners complete an additional week of pre-service training and four hours of monthly professional development, the applicant does not clearly define what is entailed in the pre-service and professional development for these key positions. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of this training and the effect it will have on those individuals.

Reader's Score: 9

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. (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.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a comprehensive management plan that includes specific activities, milestones, timelines and persons who will take the lead responsibilities for the completion of the tasks. Those milestones include identifying the partner schools at the beginning of the project and the completion of family tasks throughout the project. The timelines are specific and are directly connected to the activities and milestones. This well designed management plan will ensure that the project objectives are met on time and within budget. (Pages e37 - e38 and Pages e134 - e206)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

Strengths:

The applicant has applied for this priority. (Page e16). To meet this priority the applicant will partner with the Hope Scholars program of University of Berkley, a Minority-Serving Institution. (Page e26) The partnership is supported effectively by a memorandum of understanding that outlines specific roles of the minority-serving institution. This includes participation in the Youth Advisory Board meetings as well as actively being a part of the planning and evaluation processes. (Page e118)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

**Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning
(up to 2 points)**

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

Strengths:

Did not apply.

Weaknesses:

Did not apply.

Reader's Score: 0

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	70
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	5
Total	77	75

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the proposed project, Compass Care, a promising new strategy to address chronic absenteeism to address the effect of the pandemic and other stressors experienced by marginalized (underserved) students and their families. It is designed to address confirmed indicators that document the importance of regular school attendance for academic achievement and social emotional health, especially for students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities who are at greater risk of chronic absenteeism (which is defined as 10% or more of school days). For example, compared to their White peers, American Indian and Pacific Islander students are 50% more likely to miss three or more weeks of school, Black students are 40% more likely, and Latinx students are more than 17% more likely (p. e21).

These challenges were compounded with the challenges of social distancing during the pandemic, where 87% of school leaders reported the negative impact on social-emotional development of students and saw absenteeism doubled from pre-pandemic levels (from 8 million to 16 million) (p. e22). The challenges continue as an increased number of schools are unable to provide needed support for identified high-needs students due to a variety of significant factors such as lack of resources (i.e., trained staff, materials); individual (i.e., behavioral health); systemic (i.e., institutional racism); family, homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse); and unmet non-academic needs (i.e., food insecurity, transportation).

The proposed project, the Compass Care model, is a promising new strategy designed to address these gaps and factors by designating a Family Partner (FP) who will provide individualized support to students identified with chronic absenteeism during a 10-week intervention period (p. e23). The FP will provide support through case management and coordination of needed support services.

The model is supported by strategies outlined in Multisystemic Therapy (MST), an evidence-based strategy that aligns with the flexible, individualized, strengths-focused, team-based approach of Compass Care (p. e25). It is also aligned with the applicant's Unconditional Education (UE), which is a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports implemented in 87 schools in California and Washington. The focus of UE is on schoolwide culture and climate that complements trauma-informed academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions (p. e 25).

The applicant also states that the project has potential to expand beyond the identified sites to replication

Sub

throughout the nation. Results of the project findings, documented by the partnership with WestEd, will be shared with school systems who are interested in adopting the model. And because of its evidence-based and promising strategies foundation, the strategies should support resource development and funding for successful project replication and expansion.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the conceptual framework of the proposed project that is designed to address chronic absenteeism of students impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project, Compass Care, will be implemented in seven schools in California, Tennessee, and Washington with whom the applicant has well-established partnerships. The identified local educational agencies (LEAs) serve primarily low-income, racially diverse communities that are at greater risk of absenteeism and have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic (p. e28). The applicant provided a chart of LEA Demographics to support their selection. For example, for Highline Public Schools in Washington, students of color represent 83% of the student population with a chronic absenteeism rate of 39% (p. e28).

The project will serve underrepresented students in the identified seven schools to address gaps through dedicated staff, flexible and intensive interventions, a peer provider model, and the incorporation of evidenced-based teaming practices to provide a comprehensive, holistic approach (pp. e 23 - e25, pp. e27 - e28). The program integrates evidence-based strategies (i.e., Multisystemic Therapy) with promising practices to provide services to the students and families.

The conceptual framework is built upon a promising practice, Compass Care, supported by the documented successful evidence-based approach, Multisystemic Therapy, to address chronic absenteeism in underrepresented groups of students. This should facilitate the successful implementation of project goals and objectives resulting in achievement of expected outcomes – including national replication.

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Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed summary and description of specific and measurable goals, objectives and expected outcomes for the proposed project (pp. e28 - e33). Two goals were identified: 1) Improved attendance, self-management, school connectedness, and academic engagement and 2) Families empowered to connect with resources to sustain student engagement and achievement (p. e29).

Five stages of program implementation were identified (i.e., Outreach and Onboarding, Engagement, Action, Transition and Sustainability). A concise summary and supporting measurable objectives and expected outcomes were identified for each stage. For example, for the Transition and Sustainability Stage, the following information was provided: Objective 4 -- Students who are successful will graduate from the program. Students still struggling with attendance and/or grades are re-enrolled for another cycle; Outcome 4.4 – 755 of participants feel they have the skills to sustain the student’s engagement and achievement (p. e32).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive and thorough summary of the strategies to be used to address the needs of the target population. Included in these strategies is the Participatory Action Research (PAR) component of the project in partnership with Hope Scholars and Valor Collegiate Academies to facilitate a Youth Advisory Board. The members of the Youth Advisory Board will be actively involved in the planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities of the project to facilitate appropriateness for the target population of 672 high-needs students enrolled in 5th to 12th grade in the identified seven middle and high schools.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided a comprehensive description of the key project personnel who will be implementing the proposed project. The description included a concise and focused statement regarding the applicant's priority and commitment to hire individuals from underrepresented groups as evidenced in its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy. The applicant also provided supportive data to reflect the diversity of its employees (68% Black, Indigenous or Person of Color, and over 30 speak more than one language (p. e35). To further support this commitment, the applicant included its official agency document, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Agency Commitments, which included a statement of the commitments to Advance Racial Equity and Anti-Racism and to Cultural Humility and Reflective Employee Practices (p. e208).

A focused identification of the key personnel was also included, supported by resumes that documented their qualifications. For example, the Compass Care Project Director is the applicant's Chief Program Officer for Education Services with more than 20 years of experience in education and school transformation (pp. e33 - e34). This was documented by her resume that reflected expertise in program management, development and implementation, community partnership engagement, and budget oversight – skills important for successful leadership of the proposed project (Appendix, pp. e53 - e55). She was also critical in the design and implementation of the proposed project, Compass Care. She will be supported by Regional Directors who will supervise Directors of Schools Partnerships - all who have relevant skills for effective project implementation.

A hierarchical organization chart was also included that reflected project reporting relationships of the Project Director, Senior Director of Education Innovation, Advisory Council, Youth Advisory Board and Regional Directors for each region of the proposed project (p. e207).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. (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.**

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant provided a sound and well-defined management plan to achieve expected project outcomes. The plan structure was based upon its 37 years of successful experience in managing grant contracts similar to the proposed project. In addition, an external evaluation of the project will be led by WestEd, nationally recognized for its experience and partnerships with similar projects. An additional support will be the Advisory Council and a Youth Advisory Board (pp. e35 - e36).

The plan was supported by a chart with detailed Activities, Milestones, and Leads with monthly timelines for each year of the project period. Examples of the specificity of the plan for each stage of the project included the following: Transition and Sustainability Stage: Activity (Post-intervention survey given to students and families; Milestone (85%+ of families complete the survey; Lead (Family Partner/FP, External Evaluator/WE); and Timeline (Weeks 8 - 10 of each cycle, annually) (pp. e37 - 38).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)**
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)**
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)**
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)**

Strengths:

The applicant will formally partner with the Hope Scholars program at University of California Berkeley (UCB), a minority-serving institution. The partnership was supported by both a Letter of Support signed by the Catherine Mary and Eileen Clare Hutto Chair for Social Services in Public Education (p. e116) and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the Program Director of the Berkeley Hope Scholars, UC Berkeley, Centers for Educational Equity & Excellence (p. e118). Under the MOU, Berkeley Hope Scholar Program responsibilities include facilitating student participation in Youth Advisory Board meetings and actively participating in the planning progress and project evaluation through attendance at quarterly project meetings during the project period.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

**Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning
(up to 2 points)**

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	70
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Promoting Equity	5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. Workforce Diversity	2	0
Sub Total	7	5
Total	77	75

Technical Review Form

Panel #15 - EIR Early-Phase - 15: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant's proposed project "Seneca's Compass Care" is a comprehensively designed program that addresses current gaps in chronic absenteeism interventions. The applicant provides compelling data as to the scope of the problem of chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10% or more of school days), and the lack of well-researched methods that lead to improvements. Compass Care will include the elements of mentor relationships, family engagement and data-driven practices, while adding additional evidence-based/promising practices by utilizing a peer mentors model and having dedicated staff. The model also draws on Multisystemic Therapy (MST), an evidence-based practice (EBP) that demonstrates positive impacts on school outcomes (pp. e24-e25).

The applicant cites multiple sources that establish a strong correlation between chronic absenteeism and other adverse outcomes for students, which include but are not limited to lower academic performance and achievement, including lower reading and math scores, grade retention, and dropout (p. e21). Furthermore, the applicant notes that the problem is large in scope, with chronic absenteeism as one of several concerning emergent needs post-pandemic. For example, the applicant notes that the most current chronic absenteeism rates are double the pre-pandemic rates (p. e21). While the problem of chronic absenteeism remains unacceptably high overall, students from historically marginalized groups, including students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities seem to be experiencing the most dire effects from the pandemic. Students in these groups are at a greater risk of chronic absenteeism, and are experiencing the widening of pre-existing learning disparities (pp. e21-e22).

The applicant acknowledges the already extensive efforts to develop effective strategies to improve chronic absenteeism rates, but has found that "this research has often been siloed into school-based, mental-health-based, or ecologically-based approaches, with few studies examining multidisciplinary solutions" (p. e22). The applicant has thoroughly demonstrated that Compass Care is a promising new strategy that will build upon existing research, through a design that is scalable and will address the inadequacies of prior research and interventions (p. e24).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

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

Strengths:

The conceptual framework provided by the applicant is exhaustive and well-articulated. The Compass Care program is thoroughly defined, with a detailed curriculum provided to ensure the framework is followed to fidelity. The applicant notes that Compass Care draws upon the model of Multisystemic Therapy (MST), which is an evidence-based practice that positively impacts school outcomes, including attendance, family and peer relations, and academic progress. The applicant identifies the components of the project design that are informed by MST as the following, "(1) highly flexible, individualized, strengths-focused, and accessible services and (2) a team-based approach, including structured tools and processes, to explicitly target the connection between school and family" (p. e25).

The applicant includes a detailed logic model with specific goals, inputs, strategies, outputs and outcomes. Each section is well defined with a clear link to the relationships to the conceptual framework. For example, one component of the conceptual framework is that "Interventions that are short-term, strengths-based, highly flexible and individualized, and specifically target the family-school linkage have been demonstrated to effectively improve students' attendance rates". The applicant clearly establishes how the conceptual framework informs the project in every phase from onboarding to sustainability (of student and family) (p. e126).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The applicant has provided detailed information about the methods of data collection they will employ. Each project objective has quantifiable measurements (such as percentage completion, etc.), that are indicated for the accompanying performance measures. One such measurement states that "80% of action steps regarding referrals to support services are completed, resulting in families being connected with basic needs supports/resources (e.g., access to food, legal assistance, mental health support, housing)" (pp. e253-e255). The data collection tools are both quantitative and qualitative and include items such as percentages of participation or completion of program tasks, school/LEA records, pre/post student surveys with existing SEL, and feedback surveys for students and families, among others (p. e45).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs. (15 points)

Strengths:

The applicant has integrated several components into their project design to ensure that the project is appropriate and will successfully address the needs of the target population. The target population is identified as students who have attendance records that fall within the range of "chronically absent."

The applicant (1) has developed a strategy that will address the identification and recruitment of students appropriate for the project, (2) identified barriers and flaws that have made previous interventions inadequate, and (3) clearly demonstrates the way in which their project design address these barriers to increase the likelihood of achieving desired outcomes (e.g., utilizing MTS, peer mentors, an intensive and flexible intervention, and a strengths-based approach). The Compass Care Team Manual contains protocols and tools specifically focused on supporting families in identifying barriers to attendance and developing appropriate solutions (pp.e135-e206).

The Advisory Council will further support the development of a project appropriate to the population, as the composition of the council includes multiple experts in related fields of study, and youth with lived experience in risk factors for chronic absenteeism. As noted by the applicant, "this Participatory Action Research component will help ensure the program's relativity and responsiveness to the target population" (p. e26).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. In addition, the Secretary

Sub

considers the qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel. (10 points)

Strengths:

The applicant has provided multiple citations that validate their commitment to the encouragement of applications from members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented.

The applicant provides information about non-discriminatory hiring practices on their job descriptions, as well as a DEI policy in the appendix addressing their commitment to diversity (p.e78, e208). The applicant directly states in their proposal that "Seneca prioritizes hiring staff from traditionally underrepresented groups who reflect the youth and families served..." They provide supporting evidence with statistics demonstrating the diversity of their current workforce (p. e35).

The applicant has provided the resumes of key personnel, and show the high level of expertise and qualifications held by both project staff and advisors (p. e53-e107). The qualifications held by the project personnel include training, experience and licensure in social work, counseling (Regional Directors and Senior Director of Education Innovation) and advanced degrees in Education Policy and Organizational Leadership Studies (Project Director). The evaluation team is equally qualified and experienced to deliver successful evaluation of the project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 10

Sub

- 1. (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.**

Strengths:

The timeline and budget included by the applicant are exhaustive, with a detailed chart of goals, responsibilities of each entity, and milestones to be attained. The budget summary includes a breakdown of all expenses, the rationale for the budget line items, and the full-time equivalent (FTE) expected by each staff person, each year. The comprehensive scope of these documents indicates the timeline and budget are appropriate for the achievement of the project goals (pp. e37-e40, e211, e222-e252).

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:

Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners (up to 5 points)

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate how the project will be implemented by or in partnership with one or more of the following entities:

- (a) Community colleges (as defined in the NIA)
- (b) Historically Black colleges and universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (c) Tribal Colleges and Universities (as defined in the NIA)
- (d) Minority-serving institutions (as defined in the NIA)

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a meaningful partnership through the provided Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with University of California, Berkeley's (UCB's) Center for the Educational Equity and Excellence's Hope Scholars program (p. e118). Hope Scholars is a minority-serving institution, and members of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB) will directly inform the project design and evaluation. The applicant will work with Hope Scholars to recruit participants, which has been structured to be mutually beneficial by providing opportunities in leadership development and financial compensation (p. e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2:

Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning (up to 2 points)

Projects that are designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, diverse, and effective educators serving students, with a focus on underserved students, through building or expanding high-poverty school districts' capacity to hire, support, and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce, through adopting or expanding comprehensive, strategic career and compensation systems that provide competitive compensation and include opportunities for educators to serve as mentors and instructional coaches, or to take on additional

leadership roles and responsibilities for which educators are compensated.

Strengths:

CCP2 not addressed.

Weaknesses:

CCP2 not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/15/2023 05:09 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/06/2023 05:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	21
Sub Total	30	21
Total	30	21

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 5: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 21

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

In general, the evaluation plan is well-written and easy to understand. A strength of the evaluation is the plan for matching treatment and control students by chronic absenteeism (page e40) before randomly assigning to condition, which is appropriate given the goals of the evaluation. Using Mahalanobis distance matching is appropriate given the high multicollinearity among the pretest measures (page e41).

The plan for handling the possibility of a difference between conditions at baseline is sound (page e41). A strength of the proposed evaluation is that it includes a clear threshold for using an inverse propensity score weighting adjustment if differences are detected between the treatment and control conditions at pretest (when differences exceed 0.25 standard deviations).

The outcome measures are appropriate for the goals of the evaluation (page e40-e41). The evaluation plan includes appropriate pretests that will permit the applicant to evaluate the baseline equivalency between the treatment and control groups.

The size of the minimally detectable effect size (MDES) is reasonable given the nature of the study (page e42). To the applicant's credit, the evaluation plan uses a relatively conservative value for MDES (0.23) given prior research.

The proposed regression model is well described in the evaluation plan including a description of the model's coefficients (page e42). The analytic model includes a fidelity-of-implementation (FOI) measure (i.e., "participation level"), which is consistent with the goals of the evaluation (page e43).

Weaknesses:

stronger application would provide evidence of the reliability and validity of the instruments in the body of the application instead of simply stating that the instruments have documented reliability and validity (page e44).

A significant weakness in the proposed evaluation is the lack of details about how baseline equivalency will be accomplished including a list of the specific metrics that will be used. On page e40 the evaluation suggests that

Sub

baseline equivalency will be established using the metric of chronic absenteeism while a subsequent statement suggested that baseline equivalency will be established with “pre-test measures of the outcomes” (page e41). A stronger proposal would clearly articulate how this critical component of QED will be determined.

Although is not a requirement for a QED to meet WWC standards with reservation, longitudinal field studies are strengthened by having a clear plan for handling issues that typically plague these studies including identifying and addressing missing data. A stronger proposal would clearly identify a plan for dealing with challenges that typically arise in a longitudinal field study and examining for the possibility of differences between conditions.

Reader's Score: 14

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

Strengths:

A strength of the evaluation plan is the inclusion of regular site visits by the evaluators as well as interviews with project staff via videoconferencing (page e44). The plan to use a thematic qualitative plan to create a comprehensive a general sense of FOI is another strength (page e44). The FOI measures are appropriate and well-documented. Another strength of the proposed evaluation is the planned use of an interactive data dashboard that the evaluators will use to share implementation data with their partner (page e44).

Weaknesses:

A stronger application would provide an example of how the FOI will be used to inform the ongoing project.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

The measures used to evaluate the key project components are clearly described (page e45). The plan to aggregate the FOI data and create three levels of implementation at both school and project levels is a strength.

Weaknesses:

A stronger proposal would include documentation for establishing the reliability and validity of the instruments used to measure the key components particularly for the mediators listed in Exhibit 6 (page e45).

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/06/2023 05:30 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/07/2023 03:13 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	17
Sub Total	30	17
Total	30	17

Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 5: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Seneca Family of Agencies (S411C230088)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice). (20 points)

Strengths:

Seven middle and high schools will be included, across three states, for a total of 672 students (e27). Compass Care participants will be matched with comparison students who are chronically absent (e40). The groups would meet the WWC requirement for not overlapping.

Statistical methods for matching (Mahalanobis) and inverse propensity score weighting are consistent with WWC standards (e41).

The multi-state implementation strategy will support the project's long-term replicability, as does the easily scalable program design. An implementation manual and fidelity index would be produced by this project (e26), to aid schools wanting to replicate the project. A current implementation manual exists and would be revised.

Weaknesses:

Seven middle and high schools will be included, across three states, for a total of 672 students (e27). However, the distribution across states and grade levels of the seven schools is not specified. Nor is it clear why the districts were chosen. Of the three LEAs, two have chronic absenteeism rates at the national average, and one is significantly higher. It seems the selection was based on existing partnerships, and not a data-driven selection (e28).

While the applicant identified acceptable statistical procedures to conduct matching and baseline equivalency, they did not identify the characteristics with which matching would be conducted.

The QED sample will be self-selected participants who choose to participate in a chronic absenteeism prevention program. However, the applicant notes that a past project was limited by an inability to provide more intensive, family focused supports when families are not engaged (e25). It is unclear how the applicant will overcome this known barrier to enlist families, or how language and/or cultural barriers will overcome.

Objective 1 measures will aim to achieve 10-15 families per school in years 2 and 3. This is a small number of

Sub

families to draw valid school level conclusions (e29).

Objective 2 mixes the Family Partner's actions (e.g. support each family) with the participant families' actions in creating a Family Team (e30). The metrics used are the completion of program curricular pieces. The objective should more clearly focus on the Family Partner's work, or evidence of the families' changed behavior. Completion of curricular components (e.g. Tree of Life, Why Wheel) alone does not lead to robust engagement outcome(s) (e126). It is unclear how these outputs would result in the identified family outcome reflected in the logic model (e126).

Objective 4 includes an outcome for participants feeling supported and experiencing "radical respect from their FT." There is no definition of what "radical respect" is or how it is measured. The applicant is using loaded and subjective language that cannot be reliably measured (e32).

Reader's Score: 12

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

Strengths:

The use of a Youth Advisory Board is an effective way to gauge student feedback and provide opportunity for youth voice (e26).

Formative survey feedback will be administered after each program cycle, using questions from existing reliable and valid protocols (e44).

The evaluator will produce an interactive data dashboard, allowing program staff to monitor implementation easily and modify as needed (e44).

Weaknesses:

Formative feedback from the evaluator only appears to be annual, and appears to be only qualitative, described as interviews, school visits, YAB listening sessions, and surveys (e43). It is unclear how or if the quantitative measures (e.g. increased time in school, increased academic achievement) will be progress monitored and reported.

Parent feedback will be utilized through the post-intervention survey to inform program modifications. It is unclear how frequently this information will be summarized and acted upon (e33).

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. (5 points)

Strengths:

Implementation will be measured by a variety of data sources (e45). Project components, corresponding data sources and mediators are clearly defined (e45).

Weaknesses:

The outcomes specified in the evaluation plan's logic model are not benchmarked or timebound (e.g. semester, school year). Given the short-term nature of the program, it is presumable that outcomes could be achieved in a

Sub

shorter time-frame, and not annualized, but this is not specified (e126).

An SEL pretest will be given to all students in the seven schools. Applicant states the survey will be valid and reliable to measure self-management and school connectedness (e40), but provides no documentation. Bibliography is provided but no narrative justification.

A survey to assess improved SEL outcomes, and school connectedness will be developed by the evaluator, rather than using or adapting evidence-based SEL surveys (e126).

Overall, it is not clearly stated which surveys will be used for which purposes.

No explanation of how the composite variable for participation level will be calculated
Although they have experience with the program, no participation thresholds are yet identified (e45).

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/07/2023 03:13 PM