

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/14/2023 12:12 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	17
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	26
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	63
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	68

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - EIR Early-Phase - 11: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

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: 17

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 proposed project describes the project involves the demonstration of strategies that build on existing strategies. The project proposes to address academic and mental health disruptions and disparities by developing a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that, unlike existing programs, is fully integrated with best practice in instruction.

The proposal targets a transformation in social-emotional learning that takes full advantage of evidence-based instructional practice to achieve synergistic effects on peer-based risk and protective factors, which in turn should impact both academic achievement and mental health (p. e29).

The proposed project includes technology-supported implementation of best-practice in Cooperative Learning (CL) instruction and adds curricular development efforts optimized to take full advantage of PeerLearning.net capabilities while providing vital SEL instruction.

Weaknesses:

The application lacks information for details about the project. For example: there are no details about the app to be used and the programs that teachers can access online. This information is pertinent as it is a large part of the program due to the teachers using the app and programs in the classroom with students (p e32, e119).

Reader's Score: 17

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: 26

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 application describes the project will base the program framework on the Contact Theory (CT) (Pettigrew, 1998) and Cooperative Learning (p. e29). CT is a powerful framework for addressing prejudice and promoting positive intergroup relations and specifies the conditions under which social contact can lead to true integration among members of different social groups.

Cooperative learning (CL) is a small-group instructional approach that closely mirrors the key features of Contact Theory. Specifically, CL brings students together under conditions of positive interdependence, where goals are structured such that individual goal attainment promotes the goal attainment of others in the learning group and vice versa. To assist teachers in implementing CL, the applicant will give them access to PeerLearning.net (<http://PeerLearning.net>), which provides easy-to-use lesson templates with workflow support that enable the straightforward design and delivery of evidence-based CL lessons (e.g., jigsaw, peer tutoring)(p. e29-31).

Weaknesses:

no weakness 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 includes specific and measurable objectives and outcomes to be achieved during the implementation process and for the project key goals. The goals are detailed and clearly described when they should be completed. For example: Program Goal 1 in Years 3 & 5 reach at least 2,700 high-needs Grade 9 students with high quality social-emotional learning (SEL) and demonstrate a positive impact after one and two years on academic, social-emotional, and mental health outcomes (p. e36-38).

Weaknesses:

no weakness 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 adequately describes a plan to conduct an evaluation assessment to learn of the target population's needs. The evaluation will be conducted in partnership with the Salem-Keizer school district, the second largest district in Oregon (> 38,000 students) (P. e39). The student body is diverse (~40% Latinx, ~40% White ~10% Multi-racial, ~5% African-American), and more than 90% of students are considered to be economically disadvantaged, so project results should be highly generalizable. The agency will recruit 20 schools, with 10 randomly assigned to intervention condition. Within the intervention schools, the agency will train ~2-3 teachers/school to deliver the program; across 10 intervention schools, 25 teachers will be trained. In past studies, the agency has rarely lost teachers after assignment to condition, but the agency will assume a 10% attrition rate for a final sample of 22-23 teachers. The agency will recruit a similar number of teachers in control schools, for a total sample of 45 teachers

Sub

(P, e45). The agency will survey teachers in Year 3 but not Year 4, when students are in 10th grade and the program is not present. In Year 5, the agency will provide training in the SEL program for the control schools and will provide general training for subject-area teachers (e.g., math, science) in all schools to enable them to use PeerLearning.net in their own instruction. The agency anticipate that these subject-area teachers will number 15 per school, or 300 in total. The agency expects 150 students to participate, on average, from each school, for a total targeted sample of 3,000 (1,500 in intervention schools and 1,500 in control schools). Based on previous similar studies (Low et al., 2019), the agency anticipates that approximately 10% of students will be lost due to family relocations. Thus, the agency assumes a final sample of 2,700 students (p. e22, 33, 36).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not include a description of the present needs of the subpopulations. For example: the applicant did not survey the target population (intended high schools, teachers, students, etc.) for their specific needs (P. e22, 33,35,45).

Reader's Score: 11

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 asserts that the University of Oregon (UO) and College of Education administrators, faculty, and staff are committed to actively recruiting and hiring qualified individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups to improve expertise, enhance capabilities, and to ensure institutional growth through the inclusion of diverse perspectives. For example, the UO actively affirms and protects the rights of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment without regard to race, culture, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation. This policy implements all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and executive orders. Beyond these procedural safeguards, the UO's College of Education maintains a file of national and regional placement offices that specifically target historically marginalized populations for recruitment purposes. Advertisements for new positions are sent to each of these offices and to other regional and national colleges, universities, and professional organizations including those focused specifically on underrepresented groups including HBCU's, Hispanic serving institutions, and Tribal colleges and universities. All advertisements for new positions are made available in accessible formats, and recruiting efforts take full advantage of Internet resources using online recruitment through electronic media (p. e141-142).

Weaknesses:

no weakness noted.

Sub

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 application adequately describes the responsibilities of each key staff person and partner. For example: the evaluation partner (The WestEd) will be responsible for research design, organization of data collection and analysis, and evaluation of outcomes, the identification, consenting, and data collection within selected treatment and comparison schools to achieve the most rigorous comparative analysis, school visits to support evaluation of performance measures, collaborate to produce federal reports and dissemination materials for stakeholders and submission and oversight of Institutional Review Board (IRB) materials.

The applicant's logic model is complete and detailed. For example: all activities are listed on a timeline with tasks milestones, and the staff responsible for completion (p. e42-43).

Weaknesses:

no weakness 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 explains the Development Team will include representatives from Community Colleges (Lane Community College) and Minority-Service Institutions (Portland State U.). For example: Letters of Commitment are provided in

Appendix. The Development Team will partner with key personnel to develop and pilot the SEL lessons (p. e-22).

Weaknesses:

no weakness 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:

Applicant did not address CPP 2.

Weaknesses:

Not applicable.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/14/2023 12:12 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/12/2023 07:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	16
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	24
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	60
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	65

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - EIR Early-Phase - 11: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

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: 16

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 aims to address issues in its identified schools, and those issues are prevalent problems many schools in the nation, i.e., academic underachievement due to loss of educational time during the COVID-19 pandemic and disparities in achievement gaps perpetuating in low socio-economic families/students and in minoritized ethnicities (p. e26).

This proposed project focuses on intertwining academics and cooperative learning strategies as a foundation for improving both academic achievement and students' mental health and socioemotional learning (p. e29). Specifically, the applicant proposes an approach of implementing Peer Learning.net joined with social-emotional learning with students in the teachers' design and delivery of Cooperative Learning (CL) to students in 9th grade, twice a week for 50 total lessons (p. e33).

Significance is noted for this project to reach a large number of students during the project years, i.e., three thousand 9th grade youth will be involved in the utilization of PeerLearning.net (p. e34). Such a large number will create a more valid target population group to test the efficacy of the PeerLearning.net product and its impact upon academic achievement, cooperative learning, and enhancement of positive behavior skills (pp. e33-e34).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate that this web-based product is a new approach in student learning and teacher pedagogy. Cooperative learning is not innovative and has already been proven to be successful as one tool to provide collegial spirit, heightened interest in learning, camaraderie among students, and improved relationship building. The PeerLearning.net software application is not new, as the applicant states it recently completed a one-year cluster randomized trial of peerLearning.net using students in twelve middle/high schools in Oregon (p. e32). This project is presented as another research study to validate a web-based cooperative learning web-based software application product and not an innovative methodology (p. e119). The applicant does not fully explain the enhancements being offered to the original software that would make PeerLearning.net a novel product or teaching/learning tool.

Sub

Reader's Score: 16

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: 24

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:

A strong research foundation is noted for the project's utilization of its primary conduit of learning, the PeerLearning.net software application, for cooperative learning among middle school/9th grade students. Foundational research for this learning approach of cooperative learning includes quality studies of Contact Theory for promoting positive intergroup relations (Pettigrew, 1998); high value of intergroup contact leading to reduced racial prejudice and promoting overall positive relationships (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006); increasing academic achievement (Johnson et al., 2014); and reduction of mental health problems (Van Ryzin & Roseth, 2021) (pp. e29-e31).

The applicant's logic model is well-designed for depicting the resources, activities, outputs, proximal outcomes, and distal outcomes for the utilization of PeerLearning.net (p. 115). Of significance are the primary student outcomes of improved academic engagement, improved student attendance, and reduced peer rejection, improved self-efficacy, reduced ethnic discrimination, improved mental health, and improved social-emotional skills (p. e115).

Weaknesses:

There is a lack of clear evidence that the applicant's demonstration activities in its pilot project of PeerLearning.net links this software application having a positive impact upon urban students, which will be a large part of the target population of this project (p. e32). Without such foundational information, it is difficult to gauge the effectiveness that PeerLearning.net will have upon urban students' learning and social-emotional development.

Reader's Score: 9

- 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:

Four clear project goals and ten measurable, time-bound, and realistic project objectives are presented, and they focus on what the project-participating teachers will be able to know and do during this five-year project and how the ninth-grade student participants will be impacted on student academic achievement, attendance, and self-reported social-emotional and mental health outcomes (p. e38).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Sub

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 PeerLearning.net software application is designed for ease-of-use by the teachers and best meet their needs in offering a low-burden delivery system (p. e33) and methodology for teachers to create cooperative learning lessons for the students. The cooperative learning application is an important instructional support for students to utilize in group learning of the academic content concepts while also linking to the social-emotional learning concepts that the youth need (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not demonstrate that it has any needs assessment data from the selected participating project schools to form a nexus between the needs of both rural and urban high-school aged youth and the content and approaches in PeerLearning.net in small group cooperative learning and social-emotional learning (p. e45). The needs of rural and urban youth in schools are not always the same, so it is important that the design of the PeerLearning.net take into account the key needs of small town and rural youth and also large city urban youth.

Reader's Score: 10

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 attests that it has a commitment to actively recruit qualified individuals that are from traditionally underrepresented populations. Quality strategies of encouraging project applicants include referencing national and regional placement offices for applications from marginalized populations; advertising project positions through career postings at Historically Black Colleges and University, Hispanic-Serving institutions of higher learning, Tribal universities/colleges, and online recruitment websites (pp. e141-e142).

The project's key personnel of project director (full time equivalency of between .30 FTE to .50 FTE over the five project years) and the project co-director (between .10 FTE and .20 FTE over the five years.), and the data/fiscal manager (.10 FTE each of the five project years) all have high all have high quality education, training in project-relevant fields, and quality career experiences to best serve in their capacities in this project (pp. e75, e78, e140). An example of the exemplary credentials and project-relevant career experiences is noted for the project director who holds a doctorate in philosophy (Ph.D.) in Educational Psychology and is a Research Associate Professor at the University of Oregon. He has extensive project-related experiences, research, and publications in reference to children/youth behavior research, positive youth development, social-emotional learning, and academic engagement (p. e75).

Sub

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 applicant presents a quality management plan which demonstrates that it has the project staff, defined responsibilities for project staff, a specific project timeline for the entire five grant years, and milestones/project tasks that are tied to project objectives (pp. e42-e43, e132).

A project timeline is presented with project tasks/milestones, quarters and years of task implementation, and project staff responsible for each milestone's completion (p. e132). This timeline is specific to ensure that all project activities will be implemented on time, i.e., milestone of disseminating project results to occur in project years three and four (quarter 4) and in project year five in all four quarters) (p. e132).

Fiscal accountability for this project's grant funds and project expenditures is fully designed for fiscal integrity, i.e., project director working with the data manager/fiscal manager to pay invoices, develop financial reporting processes, ensuring that all expenditures are reasonable, allocable, consistent, and compliant to the designed budget and grant award guidelines (pp. e42, e141).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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 clearly demonstrates that it will be partnering with two Strengthening Institution Programs (STI)/Title III institutions of higher education, Lane Community College, and Portland State University (p. e22). Both entities will be contributing to the K-12 students by serving on the project's development team and developing and piloting the social-emotional learning lessons and the social emotional learning through cooperative learning curriculum (pp. e22, e107-e108).

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:

The applicant does not address CPP 2.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address CPP 2.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/12/2023 07:00 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/14/2023 04:47 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	16
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	21
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	10	10
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	10	10
Sub Total	70	57
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	62

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - EIR Early-Phase - 11: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

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: 16

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 lays out a promising new strategy that proposes to develop an SEL curriculum that is fully integrated with a cooperative learning approach to instruction (e27), positing that SEL programs on their own tend to have small effects on peer-based risk, particularly in non-elementary grades (e28). Consequently, the applicant proposes to lean on the proven pedagogical approach of cooperative learning to fully integrate an SEL curriculum in a student-centered instructional approach. Additionally, the applicant proposes to introduce a web-based application to support the adoption of the SEL and CL curriculum.

Weaknesses:

The applicant is missing some details and concrete examples about what the actual integration of SEL into cooperative learning structures looks like in practice and therefore how exactly this project builds on existing work. The lack of detail prevents a clear explanation of how these two tried and true best practices, cooperative learning and SEL will work together in novel ways (e32).

Reader's Score: 16

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: 21

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)

Sub

Strengths:

The applicant details a clear conceptual framework for the project, rooted in “Contact Theory” and cooperative learning (CL), and the intersection of the two. For example, the applicant describes the various elements of contact theory and the conditions required for true social integration, as well as the ways in which cooperative learning mirrors the tenets of contact theory (e29 and e30). Additionally, the applicant describes a theory of action that it believes will lead to positive student outcomes – if they applicant combines their unique SEL curriculum with peerlearning.net, then students will benefit (e35). Finally, the applicant proposes to root its curriculum in the five dimensions of the CASEL framework, a research-backed approach to SEL (e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide many details regarding the unique, self-created curriculum, beyond stating the broader CASEL framework that it aligns to. Moreover, the applicant does not fully describe what peerlearning.net is and what specific resources or capabilities of the platform the project proposes to leverage (e32).

Reader's Score: 7

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 describes four clear program goals with several aligned objectives that are measurable (e38). For instance, the applicant’s third goal is to provide high quality PD to 300 teachers on the use of peerlearning.net and they have an aligned measurable goal to enroll at least 300 teachers in training courses that encompass the concepts of CL.

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 activities described by the applicant are likely to make a significant difference in the population of 2,700 that the study proposes to reach, primarily because of the training and support offered to their teachers. First, the applicant will meet the needs of the teachers they plan to train to ensure they understand how to use the online platform (e40). Additionally, the applicant proposes on-site support throughout the school year for teachers, further boosting the chances of successful implementation (e40).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately provide details about the specific needs of the subpopulations with which the project proposes to collaborate, which in turn casts doubt on the degree to which the project addressed the needs of the target population. The applicant describes the estimated number of students they plan to participate, but do not describe any characteristics or attributes of these students that explain the needs and how their proposal aims to address these needs (e39).

Reader's Score: 9

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 describes several staff members that are instrumental in the execution of this project (e41), including the resume and qualifications of the Primary Investigator who will lead the project implementation. The applicant also demonstrates a clear commitment to "recruiting and hiring qualified individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups," naming a number of steps the university takes to ensure equal access as well as specific efforts to post available jobs in places that focus on underrepresented groups (e141-e142).

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:

In the narrative portion of the application, the applicant describes the high-level roles of fiscal oversight and coordination of services as responsibilities of the principal investigator. The applicant also describes the management and oversight of the development of the SEL curriculum. Additionally, in the appendix, the applicant provides a detailed timeline of key milestones in the project, including the responsible personnel and quarter in which each milestone occurs (e132). The level of detail provided makes it likely that the project will achieve its objectives on time and within budget.

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 mentions partnering with Portland State University, a minority-serving institution, as part of the "development team" (e34). In the appended letter of support, the partner describes a specific role in the project, namely to "identify, develop, and test new approaches to promote children's social skills and peer relations" (e107).

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:

Competitive priority not addressed.

Weaknesses:

Competitive priority not addressed.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/14/2023 04:47 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/28/2023 10:48 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	27
Sub Total	30	27
Total	30	27

Technical Review Form

Panel #14 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 14: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

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: 27

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:

The proposed evaluation is a comprehensive presentation of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design that can produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations. (e45) The evaluator has expertly proposed an RCT to determine the impact of the program on student achievement, attendance, academic engagement, and mental health outcomes. (e44) The evaluator's decisions to block by school-level characteristics and randomize 20 high schools as treatment (receiving PeerLearning.net) or control (continuing to operate business as usual) are reasonable. (e45) As the evaluator points out, this should ensure baseline equivalence. (e45) The decision to conduct this evaluation in Years 3 and 4 of the project are also reasonable for an early phase proposal. The evaluator further appropriately specifies intent-to-treat analyses to determine program impact on student outcomes. (e44, e47)

The evaluator correctly recognizes the importance of attrition, providing a reasonable rationale that rates of attrition higher than 10% are unlikely, (e39, e45) while recognizing it as a significant threat to the study. In accordance with WWC 5.0, joiners will be excluded from analyses. (e46)

The evaluator also provides a thorough presentation of a power analysis, including reasonable assumptions about the numbers of teacher and student participants, attrition rates, assumed power of 0.80, etc. (e45; e128) Their power analysis results in the determination of sensible minimum detectable effect sizes (MDES), ranging from 0.253 to 0.354.

Outcome measures are reasonable selections that align to project goals. (e46) Student GPA and attendance are valid measures easily obtained through partner districts/schools. The measures of academic engagement and mental health are shown to be valid and reliable and aligned to project goals. (e46; e122)

Hierarchical linear modeling that accounts for students being nested in schools is an appropriate analytic design. (e47) They also account for the possibility of students being nested by teachers over time, which is something unknown prior to the study. (e47) Analytic models are clear and reasonable. (e127) The evaluator also addresses concerns of missing data, noting imputation strategies that are widely practiced. (e47)

Sub

Weaknesses:

Although the evaluator recognizes the importance of attrition at the school, teacher, and student levels as a potential issue to their design, not enough rationale is given—especially in terms of the possibility of differential attrition—to warrant not detailing how they would respond if attrition levels are surprisingly high. If attrition rises to a level that the evaluation no longer meets WWC standards without reservations, what steps would be taken to ensure that the evaluation still meets WWC standards with reservations? Some acknowledgement of this possibility and a prepared response seem important.

Reader's Score: 19

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 programmer, with significant research background, has designed “sprints” with testing to inform subsequent cycles of curriculum design and instruction. (e36). In addition, a Development Team is in place to implement and evaluate in the first two years of the project to inform design prior to the evaluation. (e36) The online nature of the intervention should also provide accessible, real-time data to review and respond. The programmer and evaluator have identified a number of relevant data sources. These data are diverse, both quantitative and qualitative in nature. (e123-e125) They allow for considerable triangulation of data. Enough detail of data analysis is provided to suggest that the programmer and evaluator have an analytic strategy for survey and interview data. (e129) The evaluator also details a cost effectiveness study that would be important to informing the programmer about how to consider shifts in resource allocations. (e48)

Weaknesses:

Despite a considerable amount of data and a number of ways to permit periodic assessment of progress from performance feedback, the proposal demonstrates little intentionality—scheduled meetings; routines, strategies, or feedback loops—for the evaluator to inform programmer practice.

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:

The evaluator clearly articulates various student outcomes (e44), as well as teacher outcomes, and sufficiently demonstrates their validity and reliability. (e122-e126) The evaluator skillfully develops an implementation framework that identifies key components for and thresholds at various levels (e49-e50) that align with programmer goals. (e38) Mediators (and moderators) are clearly identified (e35), embedded in the logic model (e115), and accounted for in statistical analytic models (e128). The overall conceptualization of key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as measurable thresholds for implementation is robust.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/28/2023 10:48 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/09/2023 12:03 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	26
Sub Total	30	26
Total	30	26

Technical Review Form

Panel #14 - Early-phase Tier II Panel - 14: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: University of Oregon Foundation (S411C230136)

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: 26

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:

The evaluation methods described by the applicant are sound and if well implemented have the potential to meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservation. The applicant intends to use a randomized control study with baseline equivalency matching (e-p. 43). Data collection on all measures for both groups will occur at the same time. The sample size includes the students nested within the 20 schools (10 treatment/10 comparison) and is large enough to detect difference in intervention outcomes (e-p. 46). Likewise, the applicant includes some information about the attrition assumption (e-p. 46) and missing data (e-p. 47), as well as providing the standardized tests and measures they will use for outcomes with their psychometric properties (e-pp. 46-47).

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant states they will monitor for contamination although they believe it is unlikely, there is no discussion of what they may do in case there is contamination (e-p. 46). The attrition assumptions are reasonable, however they do not state what they would do to maintain statistical power needed to ensure the project will produce evidence to meet the WWC standards.

Reader's Score: 19

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 applicant provides some details about performance feedback during the piloting phase of the project (e-p.36) and states that they will provide frequent performance feedback (e-p. 50) and periodically monitor implementation through the PeerLearning.net dashboard (e-p. 40). The use of the dashboard has the potential to offer timely feedback for project improvement and assess implementation fidelity to keep the project on track for achieving the intended outcomes.

Sub

Weaknesses:

The performance feedback frequency is unclear as the terms frequent and periodic are not defined. More specificity on the timeframes that performance feedback will be given is needed to address this factor.

Reader's Score: 2

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 evaluation plan presents the key project components, mediators, outcomes and measurement thresholds. The applicant includes the proximal and distal outcomes in both the logic model and in the evaluation plan. The key project components and the measures for the components are thoroughly described and demonstrate reasonable linkage with the potential outcomes (e-pp. 44-45). The applicant also includes the fidelity measures and measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation that have the potential to ensure that the project stays on track, is replicable and can be linked to the outcomes (e-p. 49). The applicant intends to use a fidelity checklist for teachers, students and professional development participation. The inclusion of these checklists demonstrates the applicant clearly understands the importance of ensuring fidelity to project model to assess the interventions impact and increases the likelihood of positive results.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/09/2023 12:03 PM