

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

Status: Submitted

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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of South Carolina (S310A220032)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	25
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	16
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	20
Sub Total	80	75
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	89	84

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: University of South Carolina (S310A220032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

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

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

Strengths:

(1) The applicant describes a clear conceptual framework underlying the proposed research and the quality of that framework. The proposed project will draw from several conceptual frameworks and models, which are described in the CFEC Logic Model. The project is informed by Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein et al., 2019), which describes three environments in which children learn and grow (family, school, and community) with the child at the center. This model demonstrates that children learn and grow best when the three spheres intersect with strong family-school-community partnerships that pull the spheres together. The primary framework is the South Carolina Family Engagement K-12 Framework (SCDE, 2019), which is foundational to developing a systematic approach to family engagement. It identifies the following five strategies critical to effective engagement: Building Relationships, Communication, Linking Families to Learning Outcomes, Collaborative Practices, and Community Partnerships. The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships 2.0 (Mapp et al., 2019) assists in an understanding of this framework (pgs. 7-9; e334).

(2) The applicant describes comprehensive services to be provided by the proposed project that reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice. For example, the research and effective practice is combined with the description of the conceptual framework for the proposed project, including the following models and frameworks: Epstein's model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein et al., 2019); SC Family Engagement K-12 Framework (SCDE, 2019); and The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships 2.0 (Mapp et al., 2019). These models and frameworks form the 'what' of family engagement and Epstein's Action Team for Partnerships process (Epstein et al., 2019) addresses the 'how' of planning, implementing, and evaluating programs and activities. The project will also draw on Getting To Outcomes (GTO), an evidence-based implementation science framework (Chinman et al., 2004; Wandersman et al., 2016; RAND Corporation Projects Getting To Outcomes) (pgs. 7-9).

(3) The applicant clearly describes how the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of federal financial assistance. The applicant describes the management and governance structure and the process of integrating two advisory bodies in the structure to ensure that all programs, training, and technical assistance (TA) are evidence-based, reflect current research, and are culturally responsive, with respect to underserved families. The CFEC Specialists are a diverse group of faculty who will meet regularly with the Leadership Team and liaisons to share their expertise, in areas that include urban, suburban, and rural family engagement; diversity, equity, and

inclusion; early childhood literacy; and engaging African American and Latino families. The specialists will continue providing capacity-building professional development (PD) to schools and districts and TA to CFEC liaisons, including working with the liaisons in the partner schools, communities, and with community partners. The Advisory Committee will also be key to CFEC's structure and will continue to participate in prioritizing needs and providing input and feedback during the development of materials and trainings. The project will recruit Parent Leadership Partners (PLP) graduates additional parent representatives and will expand membership to include additional student and educator representatives from diverse populations. The applicant demonstrates how CFEC will take a collaborative approach to statewide leadership in family engagement policies and systemic initiatives. The relationship developed with SCDE will facilitate efforts to fully implement existing state policy and for the continued delivery of the evidence-based strategies at district and school levels. The project will continue to work on its objective to sustain and grow community partner infrastructure to support family engagement in education. The regular contact with statewide and regional partners will continue beyond the period of federal financial assistance (pgs. 9-15; 20).

Weaknesses:

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

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

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

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

Strengths:

- (1) The applicant describes a management plan to achieve the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. The applicant provides a

thorough management and governance plan, indicating that the Executive Director will have general oversight of the project. The Project Director will oversee CFEC and will ensure that programmatic components are evidence-based and implemented with quality. The applicant describes the members and the role of the Leadership Team and the CFEC Advisory Committee, with membership representing SC's diversity and Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) requirements. The applicant includes a project timeline, with project component activities aligned with the years of the proposed project and the personnel who are responsible for completion. The logic model provides a clear focus for the proposed project, including overarching goals, context, inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (short-term; mid-term; and long-term) (pgs. 9-11; 21-22).

(2) The applicant describes clear procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project. For example, the leadership team will meet monthly with its evaluation team, review formative assessment results, and use self-assessment tools developed by the evaluators to monitor the progress for meeting timelines and goals. The evaluation team will interact monthly with the CFEC liaisons and hold annual data parties to review the results of the data collection and to suggest adjustments. The applicant also provides a clear plan for seeking feedback from the Advisory Committee, contacts at SCIDE, partner districts, school leadership teams, and SFEC Specialists (pgs. 22-23).

(3) The applicant describes clear mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project. The applicant provides a clear plan for feedback, including regularly seeking input from its Advisory Committee, designated contacts at SCDE, partner districts, school leadership teams, and CFEC Specialists. The project will support families, schools, and communities with high-quality culturally responsive resources to help them build the capacity to effectively partner to support student achievement and development. The applicant presents Goal 3: increased number of high-quality educational options available to student/families, including outcome measures, aligned to data source, measures, and timeline. The applicant also includes an evaluation rubric to measure Evaluation Question 1: to what extent are project activities with partner schools (including infrastructure) being implemented with quality? This includes a rating scale aligned to evaluative criteria (pgs. 22-23; e418-e419).

(4) The applicant clearly describes time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel that are appropriate and adequate to meet the goals of the proposed project. The time commitments include the following: Project Director (60% FTE), Co-Project Director and Advisory Board Coordinator (20% FTE), Co-Project Director and Parent Leadership Partners Program Director (10% FTE), 5 CFEC Family Engagement Liaisons and Project Lead for their Respective Regions (100% FTE x 5), Marketing and Communications Coordinator (25% FTE), Social and Digital Media Coordinator – to be hired (55% FTE) (pgs. 23; e456-e461).

(5) The applicant demonstrates how the proposed project will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients and beneficiaries of services. For example, the project will integrate diverse perspectives by continuing to hire and retain diverse staff members and it will ensure that the Advisory Committee and faculty Specialists are diverse and integrated into the CFEC decision-making and product and service development. The project will continue the practice of establishing ad-hoc specialized advisory groups, such as CFEC's Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group to assist in developing tools for specific populations. The applicant demonstrates how CFEC partnerships with districts, schools, parents, and community organizations allow various points of access to diverse populations, including the underserved. The applicant demonstrates that it will continue to develop and include these connections to ensure that the important work is informed by and reflects a diverse range of perspectives (pg. 23).

Weaknesses:

(1) The applicant does not provide objectives for the proposed project; therefore, an assessment cannot be completely determined on how the management plan will achieve the objectives on time and within budget.

(2) No weaknesses were noted.

(3) No weaknesses were noted.

(4) No weaknesses were noted.

(5) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

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

(1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

(3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.

Strengths:

The project will integrate diverse perspectives by continuing to hire and retain diverse staff members. The applicant employs diverse staff members and these same individuals who are serving in the current CFEC project will continue serving in the proposed project (pg. 23).

(1) The applicant clearly describes the qualifications of the Project Director, including formal training and work experience in fields related to the goals of the project and experience in designing, managing, or implementing similar projects. For example, the Project Director holds the following qualifications: Juris Doctor (JD); is the currently funded CFEC Project Director; and is the Associate Director of South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC); and has been a catalyst for family engagement initiatives in South Carolina. The Co-Project Director and Family Engagement Specialist holds a Ph.D. and is currently the Project Co-Director for two grant-funded projects, was instrumental in founding research centers in two Colleges of Education, and faculty in two Medical Centers; and is a licensed psychologist for children and adolescents. The Co-Project Director/Parent Leadership Partner Program Director holds a Ph.D.; serves as a Specialist for the currently funded CFEC project and is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Online Coordinator for the Curriculum Studies component of the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction in the University's College of Education (pgs. 23-24; e55-e104).

(2) The applicant describes the relevant qualifications of each of the key project personnel to serve in the project, including formal training and work experience in fields related to the goals of the project. These key project personnel include a Project Manager, 5 CFEC Family Engagement Liaisons and Project Lead for their Respective Regions, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, and Social and Digital Media Coordinator. For example, the Project Manager hold a M.S. (Master of Science) and M.P.A (Master of Public Administration); is currently working on a Ph.D. in Educational Foundations and Inquiry; currently serves as project manager for the currently funded CFEC project; and has served 11 years in higher education administration. Each of the key personnel are very well qualified in formal training and work experience in fields related to the goals of the proposed project (pgs. 23-30; e105-e252; e58-e460).

(3) The applicant describes the qualifications, including the relevant training and experience, of project consultants. For

example, the applicant describes the qualifications of the following project consultants: Lead Evaluator (Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Research) and Co-Lead Evaluator (Ph.D. in Foundations of Evaluation); both have experience in culturally responsive evaluation methods; and research interests including multilevel modeling, quasi-experimental designs, and item response theory (pg. 29-30; e253-e293).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how the applicant's institution employs personnel who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented. The applicant does not describe how the applicant institution encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

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

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

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

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

- (1) The relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project.**
- (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**
- (3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits.**

Strengths:

(1) The applicant demonstrates the relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner in the proposed project to the implementation and success of the project. The applicant describes South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE's) commitment which, in addition to annual in-kind match (\$19,500 in years 2, 3, 4, 5), has also included commitments of approximately \$7,000 towards printing CFEC's Ready, Set – Kindergarten! family guides, approximately \$83,000 to establish 15 Community Family Resource Centers (CFRCs), and an anticipated \$320,000 to support development and distribution of an SEL curriculum and activity kits for families. CFRCs are a CFEC initiative to place materials for families on supporting their children's learning and development in locations, including gas stations, laundromats, and community centers. The CFEC liaisons and local school, parent, and community volunteers will maintain these materials. CFEC will create a toolkit for local School Improvement Council (SIC)s and community organizations to use to establish and operate CFRCs. The applicant demonstrates that several other CFEC partners have made the following match commitments: Family Connection: \$2,000 in each year (2-5); the Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies: \$8,103 in each year (1-5); and the South Carolina Educational Policy Center: \$25,000 in each year (1-5) in annual 4-year climate surveys. The applicant provides a Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the University of South Carolina's South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC); a

Preliminary MOU between South Carolina School Improvement Council and the Family Connection of South Carolina; and several letters of support and commitment (pgs. 16-20; 30; e300-e308).

(2) The applicant describes costs that are reasonable in relation to the goals, design, and potential significance of the proposed project. The costs are reasonable with not less than 30% of funds received through federal funds to be used to establish and/or expand technical assistance (TA) for evidence-based parent education programs. The budget is reasonable and includes the following federal funds: \$999,999.99 (Year 1), \$999,999.99 (Year 2), \$999,999.99 (Year 3), \$999,999.99 (Year 4), \$999,999.99 (Year 5), for a total 5-year cost of \$4,999,999.93 (pgs. 30-31; e456-e478).

(3) The applicant describes costs that are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and the anticipated results and benefits. The proposed project will serve all SC low-income and disadvantaged/underserved families and students as defined in the NIA. The applicant estimates that the proposed project will serve 20 partner schools with 40 partner teachers, serving all students and families in their classroom in 5 partner schools districts. The project will provide school-wide trainings for all teachers and staff and events for all students and families attending these schools. The project will include at least 20 English Language Parent Leadership Partner (PLP) facilitators per year for five years (100 total), and these 100 facilitators will each serve 15 Title I parents for a total of 1,500. At least 20 Spanish Language PLP facilitators in Years 3-5 (60 total) will each serve 15 parents for a total of 900 Spanish Language parents. At least 500 participants will attend the State Family Engagement Summit each year 1-5; 25 School- and District-level (local) Family Engagement Liaisons will participate in 6 Roundtables per year in years 1-5 (total 750); and 80 Local Liaisons participating in the annual spring regional family engagement trainings in each of the years 1-5 (total 400). Therefore, the costs related to the number of persons to be served are reasonable with not less than 65% of funds received through this award to serve local education agencies/districts, schools, and community-based organizations that serve high numbers of underserved students (pgs. 30-31; e12).

Weaknesses:

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

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

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

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

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

of students and educators.

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

Strengths:

(b) The applicant provides a clear description of how the project will address Competitive Preference Priority 2: Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on students, educators, and faculty. For example, the proposed project will continue activities with South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), including the upcoming annual statewide trainings for school and district-level family engagement personnel on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health (March 2022) and social and emotional learning (SEL) family curriculum and activity kits. The professional development (PD) for educators will include engaging families in SEL. The propose project will develop a new Parent Leadership Program (PLP) module addressing parents' role in pandemic recovery. The proposed project will include a focus on students most impacted by the pandemic within Carolina Family Engagement Center's (CFEC's) School and District Partner program (pgs. 4-5).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

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

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students--

(a) In one or more of the following educational settings:

- (1) Early learning programs.**
- (2) Elementary school.**
- (3) Middle school.**
- (4) High school.**
- (5) Career and technical education programs.**
- (6) Out-of-school-time settings.**
- (7) Alternative schools and programs.**
- (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and**
- (9) Adult learning.**

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

- (1) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community**

members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives)).

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides a comprehensive description of how the project will address Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting equity in student access to educational resources, and opportunities. (a)(2)(3)(4)(9) The proposed project is designed to serve all South Carolina families with emphasis on underserved families; all South Carolina public schools and districts, with an emphasis on underserved students; SCDE; and other community organizations/agencies that serve these families (pg. 4).

(b)(1) The project is designed to examine inequities by improving the engagement of underserved community members. For example, the project will engage an Advisory Committee, Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group, and a CFEC Specialist in informing the direction and development of goals and activities. The proposed project will develop and disseminate the Parent Leadership Partners program (English and Spanish language versions). The proposed project will work with community partners, such as the proposed CFEC/PASOs initiative, to create videos in Spanish for families describing parent activities in schools. The project will continue to grow and maintain the CFEC's Community Family Resource Centers to provide free materials on family engagement in student learning and development in community locations for families who cannot access online information and resources. The proposed project will continue ongoing PD in equity and inclusion for the CFEC leadership team and CFEC liaisons (pg. 5).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 4 - Competitive Preference Priority 4

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

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

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

Strengths:

(a) The applicant provides a plan to address Competitive Preference Priority 4: Strengthening cross-agency coordination and community engagement. For example, the project will integrate SCDE's SC Family Engagement K-12 Framework (2019), which is South Carolina's Framework, in all CFEC work with districts and schools. The applicant will provide supports to implement systemic activities and structures at the state and district levels as outlined in the Parental Involvement Act. The project staff will provide activities that promote a greater awareness of services and resources across CFEC partner organizations; provide CFEC liaisons with cross-training; and help to connect schools with available services and resources that match their needs (pgs. 5-6).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 3

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/26/2022 06:02 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: University of South Carolina (S310A220032)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	25
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	15
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	15	14
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Adequacy of Resources	20	20
Sub Total	80	74
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
Competitive Preference Priority 3		
1. CPP3	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
Competitive Preference Priority 4		
1. CPP4	3	3
Sub Total	3	3
Total	89	83

Technical Review Form

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

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: University of South Carolina (S310A220032)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

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

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

Strengths:

(1) The conceptual framework for this project is formed on the Epstein Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2019). This research model is well described to be effective to create an atmosphere where the three spheres of influence (family, school, and community) are at the center of learning and children best learn and grow when those three spheres intersect (p. e20). The high quality of this research model is well-detailed as it is a systemic approach in building effective relationships to improve student learning (p. e20). Epstein's concepts are well-detailed to form a goals-based approach in building long-lasting partnerships in family engagement programs, i.e., Epstein's Action Team for Partnerships Process that contains six types of parent involvement: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making, and Collaborating with the Community (p. e212).

The applicant also demonstrates its conceptual framework for this project in a logical and well-articulated Project Logic Model (p. e334). This Logic Model clearly indicates how the inputs/project activities relate to outputs, short/mid/and long-term outcomes to the project goals to achieve increased student achievement and increased family engagement in the children's learning and advocacy in the communities (p. e334). The quality of the Logic and Epstein's Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence is evident with the framework's grounding in educational research and effective practice and emphasis on serving disadvantaged students to improve student academic achievement and engagement of the communities, parents, and educators.

2. Up-to-date knowledge from research of best practices for parental involvement, student achievement, cultural diversity, mutual trust between schools and parents/families is evident in the project design and foundation. The recent research of J. Epstein & Associates in their School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook and the Rand Corporation's Getting to Outcomes are detailed for their recent and updated research in planning effective activities/practices and effective models of family engagement, i.e., 2004 and 2017 research (pp. e21-e22, e329). The applicant presents clear summaries of the research foundational evidence that establishes the project's foundation to demonstrate how it relates to this proposed project for ensuring accountability for meeting the students' needs and increasing student achievement. Such a correlation is well-shown for the Getting to Outcomes which focuses on review of project data and conducting six types of involvement of project participants in a culturally responsive manner in attaining goals in building family engagement capacity (p. e22).

3. To a considerable extent, the applicant describes how its project will build capacity and yield results after the conclusion of this project. Examples of quality capacity building for the future parent and community/school engagements include creating a sustaining communication system among partners and cross-training agencies, educators, and communities in best practices in family engagement (p. e33). Capacity building also is well-described to contain elements to create long-standing CFEC liaisons to remain in their communities and build new community-family-school positive relationships and services (p. e33). Of importance for sustaining this project is the designing and implanting the strong and effective communication systems that will bring agencies, schools, families, and organizations together with the South Carolina Department of Education and together learn and impact new learning of best practices in increasing student achievement and involving parents at every point in that path. Those strategies for sustaining, sharing, and posting family engagement opportunities and methods via social media and in-person/virtually with LEAs, schools, families, State Education Agency, businesses, and community-based organizations (p. e33). These communications will continually be updated to provide new avenues of meeting the families' basic, mental, and emotional needs (p. e33). In addition, the key project elements will be continued as the CFEC liaisons continue their essential leadership in the communities to bring educational and community organizations and businesses together to keep the advisory groups giving guidance to the family engagement practices that are specific to the local area (p. e33). The applicant's capacity building form a solid plan for continuing the critical pieces of this project beyond the five project years and are on target to reap increased community/parent engagement to increase student achievement (p. e33).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

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

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

Strengths:

(1) The applicant presents a full management plan with milestones, timetable for the milestones, and project personnel responsible for each milestone completion. The milestones indicate the key elements of the project that are necessary for success, such as to fully implement the School and School District Partnership Program having a milestone of "Implementing Teacher Partner Program with 1st Cohort" (p. e35). This milestone is established to be completed in Years 2 and 3 of the project with the Project Director being the responsible party to oversee the process (p. e35).

Sound fiscal accountability is noted in the application, with the Project Manager having the lead fiscal controls for all the budgetary and fiscal components of this project. Confidence is demonstrated with the types of budget controls and fiscal processes in place and assurance is given that the project costs will be kept within budget, i.e., Project Manager will follow Federal accounting guidelines for accounting processes (p. e458).

(2) The applicant provides a partial feedback and continuous improvement process for this project. Quality elements include the CFEC Leadership Team meeting monthly with the Evaluation Team to review project data and the utilization of assessment tools to monitor the progress of the project (p. e35). Also involved in the cycle will be the Evaluation Team meeting with the Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) Liaisons to review data, discuss project results, and recommend adjustments in the project (p. e36). The Advisory Committee will give feedback about the project and seek input from contacts at the South Carolina Department of Education, partner LEAs, and school leadership teams (p. e36).

(3) The applicant details some efforts that it will have in ensuring the high-quality of its resources, activities, and connections/services with the project participants. One example of ensuring all parents will have high-quality resources and services is the project will deliver its resources, presentations, and materials in both Spanish and English, to better accommodate parents with a primary language of Spanish. With this type of quality in the CFEC Parent Leadership Partners Program, greater parent confidence will occur, and higher quality of the family engagement messaging will happen (p. e26).

(4) The applicant well-details appropriate project time allocation for some of its key project personnel, Project Manager at 1.0 FTE and the five Family Engagement Liaisons and Project Leads for their Respective Regions at 1.0 FTE each (pp. e458-e459). The roles of these positions and the time allotments align to lead to their tasks being able to be completed with fidelity.

(5) A diversity of perspectives will be brought to bear upon this project with a variety of measures. The applicant clearly explains that it will have diversity of ideas by continuing to hire diverse staff members, enact train-the-trainer approach in the program's activities, ensure the Advisory Committee is constituted by several voices from parents to community business leaders to LEA representatives and representatives from the community-based organizations (pp. e31, e36). Furthermore, a diversity of opinions will be sought via the Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group and the numerous official partners for this project, such as the Family connection of South Carolina organization (p. e467).

Weaknesses:

(1) The applicant does not align project's objectives to the milestones in the management plan/chart (p. e35). The milestones need to be specifically connected to the milestones to clearly indicate that those benchmarks align to the objectives.

(2) Greater specificity is needed for how the parents-at-large in the communities will give input into this project and how they will be informed about the progress of the family engagement process (p. e36). It is unclear if parents will be able to offer suggestions for improvements to this project in addition to the suggestions made by the Evaluation Team and in the advisory committees (p. e36).

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

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

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

(1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director or principal investigator.

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

(3) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.

Strengths:

1. The qualifications, relevant training, and career experiences of the Project Director and Project Co-Project Directors/Family Engagement Specialists are well-explained and of high quality to ensure the success of this project. All three individuals selected for these positions hold university degrees, i.e., the Director has attained a Juris Prudence degree (J.D.) from the American University 's Washington College of Law, and the Co-Directors have Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees (one in the field of Education and the other individual has attained a Ph.D. in Psychology and Educational Administration (pp. e56, e59, e99). All three individuals have vast experience in designing and implementing relevant federally funded programs with the same emphasis as this grant. Valuable career experiences include the Director having experiences working with professional development for district and school administrators, teachers, and families in the field of technical assistance for family engagement. One of the Co-Directors has successfully served as Principal Investigator for a \$10 million Institute of Educational Sciences (IES)-funded National Center for Research on Rural Education program (p. e37). Such high quality and project-relevant education and career experiences will ensure the project will be implemented with fidelity to the grant initiative's purpose and the goals of the project.

2. The applicant provides clear evidence that the other key project personnel have quality relevant training and experience for their project positions, including positions of Project Manager, Family Engagement Liaison and Bilingual Project Lead, the Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for the Midlands, the Family Engagement Liaison Project Lead for Low Country, and Family Literacy Specialist (pp. e36-e42). All these personnel have attained university degrees (Master's degrees or Ph.D. degrees – Public Administration, Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy, Business Administration/Human Resources, or Special Education (pp. e10, e114, e118, e120, e201). The selected project personnel have numerous years of career experiences that are relevant to this project, including researching family engagement strategies, delivering presentations to parents, and working directly with special education students (pp. e36-e42). For example, the Latino Family Engagement Specialist has been a bilingual primary teacher for 17 years (p. e42) and the Family Engagement Liaison and Project Lead for the Midlands has experience in refugee resettlement and assisting/educating and empowering refugee youth, parents, and families with the Lutheran Services Carolinas and he International Rescue Committee (p. e39).

3. The qualifications, relevant training, and career experiences of the Evaluation Consultants are well-detailed to demonstrate that a quality project evaluation will be accomplished. Their educational backgrounds are of high quality, i.e., Ph.D. degrees in Educational Research (p. e42). Both consultants have vast experiences in evaluating large federal projects and/or serving as Lead Evaluators on federal projects, i.e., one consultant has served as an Evaluator on a currently funded CFEC project and has served as lead evaluator for other U.S. Department of Education and National Science Foundation grants (pp. e42-e43). The prior experiences in effectively evaluating federal educational projects by these two contractors will provide a great assurance of a well-designed and implemented project evaluation.

Weaknesses:

1. A lack of robust strategies is noted for how the applicant will encourage applications for project employment from persons who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. Avenues of outreach into the communities are needed to demonstrate a stronger recruitment of persons of color, ages, disabilities, and/or diverse ethnicities to apply for the positions in case a vacancy should occur for project personnel during the project's five years. It is important that the project staff reflect the diversity of the community and truly represent the traditionally underrepresented populations.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources**1. D. Adequacy of Resources (up to 20 points).**

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

1. The applicant clearly indicates that its primary project partner, the South Carolina Department of Education, has made a commitment to this five-year project and a Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is contained within this application as proof of the solid understanding for the partners and applicant as to their roles and commitment. Other partners entering into this Preliminary MOU with the applicant for this project's implementation include South Carolina School Improvement Council at the University of South Carolina, the Family Connection of South Carolina, the South Carolina Education and Policy Center and the Perinatal Awareness Organization (PASOS) (pp. e301-e324). Roles of the partners are well-addressed, such as the agreement of the South Carolina Department of Education agreeing to sponsor an annual statewide Family Engagement Summit, during which evidence-based best practices will be shared (p. e470).

2. Reasonableness is demonstrated for all proposed costs for the project and include clear identification of the item(s), categories of expenses, cost estimates for all five project years aligning to the importance of each position to the project's success, and summary of the basis for computation of each personnel. An example of reasonableness is the cost for the personnel being defined by employee title, appropriate salary level, FTE unit appropriate to assigned roles, and a reasonable 31.04% fringe benefit (pp. e456-e461). Other budget items that are also well-detailed include Travel (local, state, and national) with purpose of each trip, complete calculations with mileage, mode of transportation, purpose, meals, hotel, and persons needed travel (pp. e461-e463).

The project's matching funds of \$161, 141.27 per year for all five years of the project are well-defined and demonstrate a potential positive significance of the project's ownership by the applicant and other private entities, i.e., represents 13.47% of the total Federal grant dollar request (p. e474). An example of a portion of the matching funds is the \$78,000 from the South Carolina Department of Education for in-kind match in project years 2-5 for the time and effort it will contribute to the project for its employees, including the South Carolina Department of Education's Family and Community Engagement Liaison within the Office of Student Intervention Services for coordinating statewide initiative to support school and district family engagement (p. e470).

3. The applicant's Budget shows it plans to devote the obligatory 65% of the Budget to serve schools and community agencies that serve disadvantaged students and also has allocated not less than 30% of the project funds for activities for evidence-based parent education programs (p. e43). The applicant details its emphasis on serving disadvantaged students in this project and will have a significant impact, i.e., all students in 20 partner schools, 40 partner teachers, five partner school districts, serving at least 1500 Title I parents who will engage with their children's education, and 900 Spanish-speaking parents who will engage with their children's education (p. e12). These allocations of funds indicate the applicant has an emphasis upon disadvantaged students and their parents in increasing academic achievement. The project's total Federal Budget of \$4,999,999.93 for the five project years is very reasonable considering the number of children, youth, parents, and educators to be served and the expected increases in student achievement and family engagement.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Competitive Preference Priority 2

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

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

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

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

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

Strengths:

(b) The applicant discusses project resources, planned presentations and professional development opportunities for teachers, and parents as the project addresses students' and educators' needs regarding issues experienced as a result of COVID-19 (pp. e17-e18). The applicant and its partners will continue to address school and school district level family engagement personnel on Social Emotional Learning and emotional health in relation to addressing social and emotional issues that have arisen during COVID-19 (p. e17). Also planned are increases in family curriculum and activity kits for parents to address both parents' and students' mental and academic issues which emerged during COVID-19 and remote/hybrid learning (p. e18). A new Parent Leadership Program module will be designed to specifically address parents' role in their and their children's recovery from the pandemic (p. e18). All these strategies would enhance the resources and supports to meet the health and safety needs of teachers and students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Competitive Preference Priority 3 - Competitive Preference Priority 3

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

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that it proposes a project designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students--

(a) In one or more of the following educational settings:

- (1) Early learning programs.**
- (2) Elementary school.**
- (3) Middle school.**
- (4) High school.**
- (5) Career and technical education programs.**
- (6) Out-of-school-time settings.**
- (7) Alternative schools and programs.**
- (8) Juvenile justice system or correctional facilities; and**
- (9) Adult learning.**

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

- (1) Establishing, expanding, or improving the engagement of underserved community members (including underserved students and families) in informing and making decisions that influence policy and practice at the school, district, or State level by elevating their voices and their perspectives and providing them with access to opportunities for leadership (e.g., establishing student government programs and parent and caregiver leadership initiatives)).**
- (2) Increasing student racial or socioeconomic diversity, through developing or implementing evidence-based policies or strategies that include one or more of the following:**
 - (i) Ongoing, robust family and community involvement.**
 - (ii) Intra- or inter-district or regional coordination.**
 - (iii) Cross-agency collaboration, such as with housing or transportation authorities.**
 - (iv) Alignment with an existing public diversity plan or diversity needs assessment.**

Strengths:

(a) The applicant clearly demonstrates that it will provide equity of services for underserved students in several types of locations of learning, early childhood, elementary/middle/high schools, and alternative schools. The project services have been designed to be implemented in all South Carolina public schools and all South Carolina school districts, with an emphasis on reaching high concentrations of underserved students (p. e17).

(b) (1) The applicant clearly details that it will improve the engagement of underserved community members (students and families) by creating opportunities for them to be better informed, make important educational decisions, and influence policies at the school, district, and State levels. Strategies are well designed and include parents' and students' active engagement on the Advisory Committee, on the Latino Stakeholder Advisory Group, and having parents work together to create videos in Spanish to share with other families about common parent activities in schools (p. e18). These new opportunities will provide parents and students occasions to lead other groups and offer their ideas for improvements in education.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

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

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

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrates that it will establish cross-agency community partnerships to meet the family wellbeing needs. Plans are shown that the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and individual schools will work with the applicant and its partners to establish services and resources with local businesses and organizations that will serve the wellbeing needs of the children. The Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) will expand its base of community partners through active engagement of the Advisory Committee and establish community partners in each community (p. e12). Examples of current cross-agency partnerships are shown, including the Perinatal Awareness Organization (PASOS) providing health-related services and referrals for migrant children, foster-care children, and English Language Learner children (p. e314). In addition, the agency, Family Connection, provides direct health care services to area children via its health care manager (p. e309). These cross-agency partnerships will bring communities and regions together to mesh wellbeing services to better meet the needs of families and make a more efficient and effective endeavor for the families.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 04/26/2022 06:02 PM