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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	17
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	19
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	22
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	20
	Sub Total	100	78
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	5
	Sub Total	10	10
	Total	110	88

Technical Review Form

Reader #1:   **********

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i)   **The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.**

(ii)   **The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.**

(iii)   **The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.**

(iv)   **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.**

Strengths:

The narrative includes many activities that were used previously with a similar target group that may have an impact on students and/or teachers. The activities are well described and aligned with the identified needs of the proposed project. The narrative clearly identifies the need project to serve schools, teachers, and students in the project area.

(i)   The proposed project is based on clear needs identified through rigorous analysis of student and teacher-level data. For example, the narrative includes detailed information on the lack of student achievement in the target schools that would benefit from the proposed program (p. e22). The needs assessment provides a strong rationale for the use of the project activities to address gaps and lack of service in the school and district infrastructure. For example, the data collected about teacher staffing, credentialling, and turnover align well with the focus of the project and would potentially benefit from full implementation (p. e24).

(ii)   The authors include several state-level programs that could have a significant impact on the areas of need in the target schools. For example, the Educational Service Cooperatives could provide needed professional learning and targeted support to instruction and teacher certification (p. e28).

(iii)   The proposed project provides clear support for teachers and educators to address areas of need in the instructional process. For example, the project will incorporate professional learning followed by expert coaching with model lessons and walkthroughs which will allow teachers to learn and then be coached through implementation (p. e32). The proposed outcomes are rigorous and well-aligned to the overall project, as well as teaching and learning as a whole. For example, the development of math and literacy professional development based on the needs of the schools will impact participating students and teachers (p. e34).

(iv)   The proposed activities are well aligned with the target group being served by the project. For example, the distributed leadership model may have an impact on teachers who will participate in the project (p. e36).

Weaknesses:

(i)   No weaknesses were noted.

(ii)   It is unclear how the proposed initiatives will be integrated into the planned activities of the project. For example, the proposal lacks information on how Arkansas State University will be involved with the project, how they will be incorporated into the decision-making process, and how their current projects will align with the proposed projects (p. e27). It is unclear how funding streams from the included projects will be braided with the proposed grant funding. For example, there is limited information on how the Teacher Practice Network grant funding will be utilized to support the new project (p. e28).

(iii)   No weaknesses were noted.

(iv)   The narrative outlines activities that were used previously with a similar target group but does not include if these activities were effective. For example, the project cites the activities will follow the example of the previous project and participate in state-level initiatives, but it is unclear if any or all those initiatives impacted participants (p. e35).

Reader's Score: **17**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design (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:

(i)   The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.
(ii)   The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.
(iii)   The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

The narrative includes an adequate description of the program activities and design. The project includes a variety of methodological approaches that, if implemented fully, could have an impact on the target audience. The multitude of data resources collected in throughout the project could provide ample evidence of the program's effectiveness if the data were shared and utilized by project staff.

(i)   The proposed project is clearly based on a rationale that is outlined in the included Logic Model (p. e112). The Logic Model includes areas of need identified through data collection that may positively align and impact the implementation of proposed activities. For example, the systems development component will direct the elements of the Human Capital Management System to address the teacher focus of the project (p. e112).

(ii)   The proposed project is aligned to some research-based practices that may have an impact on the participating teachers and/or students. For example, the training around teachers' high expectations may positively impact students (p. e41). The narrative adequately outlines the implementation of some of the proposed activities. For example, the approach that will focus on the development of teacher leaders is moderately fleshed out and provides sufficient information on how activities will be implemented (p. e42). The narrative highlights the need for a strong, well-aligned Human Capital Management System which is a methodological approach that should provide opportunities to teachers and address the

target population (p. e43).

(iii)   The narrative includes a comprehensive list of data collection activities that could provide information to program staff regarding the progress of the proposed project on teachers. For example, the project will use rating systems, direct observations, teacher growth plans as artifacts, and classroom walkthroughs to produce data to demonstrate impact (p. e44). The proposal also includes a variety of data elements that could clearly illustrate the impact of project activities on student performance. For example, the use of nationally normed assessments to measure student achievement will allow for measures of growth in the topic areas assessed (p. e45). The use of the two PEER 2.0 network updates could be an effective means of tracking and reporting the many data elements collected in the project for periodic feedback (p. e50).

Weaknesses:

(i)   The project includes information regarding the implementation of previous related projects but does not use this as a rationale for the current project to support the continued use of the planned activities (p. e35).

(ii)   The narrative includes many initiatives that are not clearly based on research. For example, it is unclear if the proposed incentive program will have an impact on teacher performance, motivation, and/or retention as the authors do not connect it to relevant literature (p. e40). Some of the proposed activities lack detail regarding their plan for implementation. For example, the project will focus on Cultural Competence and Collective Efficacy, but it is unclear what exactly will be done, who will be involved, and what the duration of the activities will be (p. e42).

(i)   It is unclear how, when, and by whom the many data elements will be collected throughout the project. For example, the narrative states that teachers will receive frequent monitoring, regular use of a rating system, and direct observations but it lacks information on when these might occur or how frequent or regular might be defined (p. e44).

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan (25 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 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 management plan includes a well-developed overview of how the project will be overseen and who key responsible staff will be in the process. The timeline is well-developed and thorough and addresses the many activities from the narrative. The budget appears to be adequate to implement the activities planned in the project.

The management plan is comprehensive and thorough, including key staff to implement the planned activities throughout the grant period (p. e107). The included management plan chart clearly addresses each of the vital elements of the project within each year and identifies the responsible parties for the activities. For example, the plan includes the use of an external evaluator throughout the funded period to aid in the data collection and analysis process (p. e106). The budget narrative is thorough and includes sufficient detail to demonstrate the support for each of the activities outlines in the project. For example, teacher incentives and stimulus payments are clearly budgeted for each year (p. e270).

Weaknesses:

The narrative lacks details on the roles and qualifications of some of the people involved in the project. For example, there is limited information on the qualifications of the coaches who are a key position in the project (p. e107). The budget lacks details regarding how the project will be funded by district partners. For example, the proposed budget is based on matching funds from districts from whom the authors have not received agreements (p. 244).

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. Adequacy of Resources (30 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:

(i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.
(ii) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.
(iii) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

Strengths:

: The resources allocated to the proposed project will provide sufficient support to the planned activities during the funding period. The many stakeholders who have included letters of support to the project demonstrate the potential wide ranged impact the project can have on students. The activities, if implemented well, will build the capacity of the target participants, and potentially have a lasting impact on teaching in the area.

(i) The narrative clearly outlines many activities and approaches that could have a significant impact on the teacher's ability to teach and result in systemic change in the participating schools. For example, the focus on systems in the logic model is a clear demonstration of the alignment of activities to a systems change approach (p. e112).

(ii) The proposed project and activities are clearly designed to build the capacity of participating teachers. For example, the variety of data collection activities related directly to the teachers' practice will benefit participants and the students they serve (p. e52). The narrative includes many activities that will seek to align services with target school needs which could impact the capacity of the schools and district to serve students (p. e53).

(iii) The project is strongly supported by local and state-level leaders as evidenced by the many letters of support (p. e204). The included Memorandum of Understanding with the Educational Service Cooperative demonstrates the high level of commitment of the partners in the proposed project (p. e242).

Weaknesses:

(i) Some of the initiatives identified in the project may be limited by the availability of funding. For example, it is unclear if the provided incentives during the funding period will continue to have an impact on teachers when funding and incentives have ended (p. e52).

(ii) The number of coaches identified to serve the schools does not appear to be sufficient to have the desired impact. For example, the proposal states they will use 4 coaches which would not be sufficient for 45 schools (p. e252)

(iii)   It is unclear how the financial obligations will be continued once the funding ends. For example, there is not sustainability plan that would address how to fund the directors and project staff managing the various activities in the project once funding ends (p. e251).

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Competitive Preference Priority 1:
Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant 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)   Elementary school.
(2)   Middle school.
(3)   High school.
(4)   Career and technical education programs.

b.   That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:
(1)   Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-or-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.
(2)   Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

Strengths:

The proposed project provides a clearly articulated plan based on collected data to address teaching certification and training gaps. The project is focused on improving systems and teacher performance to impact student performance.

The narrative includes a clearly defined program that will be utilized in a variety of educational settings to address gaps in areas of teacher certification and training (p. e92). The project and activities identified in the narrative support experienced teachers as well as facilitates the improvement of inexperienced teachers. For example, the project will establish pipelines into alternative certification routes based on data collected about the needs in the target population (p. e91).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

   Strengths:

   The proposed project includes many well-developed activities that will address participating schools' needs regarding hiring and retention of high-quality teachers in traditionally underserved settings.

   The proposed project is clearly focused on improving the ability of high-needs schools to address gaps in their hiring and certification processes. For example, the Human Capital Management System will allow the schools to better identify needed positions and impact hiring practices (p. e99). The PEER 2.0 model utilized in the project is a well-designed process to provide data and feedback to participating teachers which will impact their ability to gain certification (p. e99). The project provides many initiatives that, if fully implemented, will allow districts and schools to improve their recruitment plans to reach out to traditionally underserved populations.

   Weaknesses:

   No weaknesses were noted.

   Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/28/2023 04:18 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)
Reader #2: **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	17
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	18
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	21
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	20
	Sub Total	100	76
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	5
	Sub Total	10	10
	Total	110	86

Technical Review Form

Reader #2:   **********

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i)   The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

(ii)   The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.

(iii)   The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

(iv)   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.

Strengths:

Overview:
The applicant intends to develop a cohort of 45 districts to support the implementation of a model titled Promoting Educator Effectiveness in Rural Arkansas (PEER 2.0). They have provided some evidence of a need for the project and ways that the project can be integrated and build on the support that already exists for teachers.

Strengths:
(i) The applicant has clearly identified multiple areas of need and gaps in the potential pool of partner schools. The applicant has identified a pool of 119 potential partner schools that are identified as having high needs, as defined by having a poverty rate of at least 50% or more. (e18) They note that in 106 of the 119 schools in the pool, the poverty rate is 65% or higher and that the identified schools are drawn from regions that are in close geographic proximity to the initial cohort of PEER partner schools. (e18). They also note that 24 schools in the pool are ranked in the bottom 5% of all schools in the state. Additionally, they provide some details about potential partner schools and their A-F rating that the state has recently developed. (e20-21)

They provide academic indicators of need (e22), as well as information about how 88 of the 119 schools utilize alternative licensure waivers/plans (e23).

(ii) The applicant identified six existing structures that they intend to build upon or support through their project design. These include supporting teachers towards National Board Certification with support from Arkansas State and the DESE Educator Support Office; participating in the Education Renewal Zone; supporting involvement with Educational Service cooperatives; and having teachers engage with an existing Teacher Practice Network that was funded by the Gates Foundation. These existing structures are well aligned to the project design and likely to support long term change. (e27-29)

(iii) The applicant has provided a partially developed explanation of how the grant will support teaching and learning and rigorous academic standards. The applicant organization provides teaching and learning professional development and

notes that the participating schools can annually request two days of teaching and learning support at no cost. They indicate that their model includes goals aligned to educator skill development, including classroom observations and progress monitoring of student learning growth. (e30) Part of the project design includes providing coaches for schools that are designed to support the implementation of the PEER 2.0 model, a portion of which is related to academic instruction. They intend to provide access to a digital library for teachers.

(iv) The applicants' plan is adequate to address the needs of the target population. The applicant has proposed three specific areas of focus for their project implementation. These include establishing new management strategies and a performance-based compensation system, identifying and implementing evidence-based strategies for building staff competencies and building teacher leaders with the final focus on improving student achievement. (e35)

Weaknesses:

(i) There is no indication that the applicant has done any specific reach out to the 119 identified pool of schools. They intend to cultivate a 45-school network for the potential pool of 119 schools but have not demonstrated any specific school-level needs or explicitly described how they will recruit from the pool. It is unclear if the schools are interested and if they have the capacity to join this type of grant project. (e20-23)

They note that they had an existing project but provide no details about how that project was implemented, results from the implementation, etc. Many of their activities are designed based on a previous project, but no information has been provided to show the effectiveness of the activities.

(ii) More detail is necessary to see how they will fully integrate the plan into existing funding streams. (e27-29)

(iii) The applicant organization has a history of providing professional development, but with this specific project, it is unclear to what extent the focus will be on providing support for teaching and learning versus simply assessing teacher effectiveness. They intend to employ school coaches. However, there will be four coaches for 45 schools which is insufficient to truly provide teaching and learning support. With the digital library, it falls to the teachers to look for their own support rather than working with a coach who can guide this support. (e30)

(iv) More detail is needed to better understand how they are purposefully designing their work to support rural schools. (e35)

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. Quality of the Project Design (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:

(i) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.
(ii) The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.
(iii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

Overview:
The applicant has provided elements of the project design that are connected to some relevant literature, a plan for implementation, as well as outlining some methods of evaluation they intend to use to support the project implementation. They also identified existing structures and policies they could utilize to help assess and support the project implementation.

Strengths:
(i) The applicant has provided a partially developed logic model to help demonstrate their project rationale (e112). This logic model includes some information about their theory of action and what they hope to accomplish through the project implementation.

(ii) The applicant has provided a brief review of relevant literature related to their project design. The literature they do include aligns well with the project design. They state training sessions will focus on cultural competency and collective efficacy, citing some studies that note these will be effective practices. (e41).

(iii) The applicant has provided a partially developed evaluation plan for the project implementation. They note they will be doing periodic observation and collecting teacher performance and student academic progress through the academic year using state-approved interim assessments and existing teacher framework. (e44) They indicate they will track performance measures for students, teachers, and systems (e45-46).

Weaknesses:

(i) The logic model included to help explain their rationale is incomplete. It does not list specific inputs, activities, objectives, or outputs they plan for their project implementation. More detail is necessary to support the rationale for their project. This could be accomplished by a more comprehensive logic model or more specificity connecting the project design to the identified gaps and weaknesses. (e112)

(ii) A more comprehensive literature would strengthen this section and the project rationale. Throughout the narrative, they state many different types of support, and some are connected to literature. However, they have failed to provide research related specifically to rural populations and to note how their project design is specifically supported by relevant literature and research. They have also not connected all activities to existing literature or rationale based on their previous implementations and/or other best practices information or the identified gaps/weaknesses. (e41)

(iii) As written, there is not enough detail to determine if the evaluation plan will support the intended outcomes. There is no indication of specific timing for the evaluation, no indication of current baseline data or when baseline data will be collected, no indication of who will be responsible for collecting and analyzing data, and no information about reporting data for the project implementation team. (e44-46)

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **Quality of the Management Plan (25 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 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:

Overview:
The applicant has an adequate management plan likely to support the project implementation. They have existing staff that will be supporting the project and have outlined major activities and milestones that are likely to support project implementation.

Strengths:
The applicant will utilize existing staff as well as hire a new project director and additional coaching support to implement the project. They outline some of the project director's key responsibilities. Resumes for existing staff were included in the appendix. (e47 and Appendix E)

The applicant has provided a table to support their management plan in Appendix C (e104). This table lists major activities and milestones, responsible staff, the year in which the activity will take place, and the initiation timeline for the activity.

Weaknesses:

The applicant included multiple resumes but did not indicate which roles these existing people would be playing in the project implementation. For the project director position, they did not provide any qualifications that will be required for the person who will lead that role. Additionally, they note in their budget narrative that they will be hiring additional coaches but do not provide any information about the qualifications for these people within the management plan. (e252)

Within the table provided, they have included some items that are not well-developed within the narrative, and the timelines are very loose. There is also limited information about how the project team will work together. A more comprehensive management plan would better ensure the successful implementation of the project. (e104)

Reader's Score: 21

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. **Adequacy of Resources (30 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:

   (i)   The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.
   (ii)   The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.
   (iii)   The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   Overview:
   The applicant has provided some evidence that they have adequate resources to implement their plan as designed. However, their sustainability plan is lacking and needs much more detail to ensure the project can continue beyond the life of the grant. The project plan elements have the potential for change based on the design. However, the applicant lacks the capacity to implement the plan at the scale they've noted.

   Strengths:

(i) The applicant has included a well-developed plan for supporting system change and improvement. (e52) Examination of the state incentive program and connection to resources to help support PEER 2.0. They have provided examples of classroom walkthroughs as well as other elements of the project design that are linked to capacity building. If these are implemented and adopted by the district, they can help support long-term change at the district level.

(ii) The applicant has outlined some elements of a plan for building local capacity. Their intention is to focus on collaboration, developing teacher leaders, utilizing reflective practice, and encouraging the use of DESE Career Continuum to support teacher career advancement. (e53)

(iii) No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

(i) No weaknesses noted.

(ii) It is unlikely that this plan will result in local capacity building. The staffing required to support 45 schools to develop local capacity is too limited. They intend to have a total of four support coaches for 45 schools, and this is inadequate to provide real support. While they mention the development of teacher leaders, it is unclear how that development will happen and how they will be supporting districts to systematize the new teacher leadership and support it beyond the life of the grant. (e52)

(iii) The budget for this grant is unreasonable and unlikely to result in long-term change at the school level. The in-kind (non-federal funding) is unclear. In the personnel - non-federal funding (e252-253), they note that the in-kind matching funds are coming from the percentage of time invested by superintendents, districts, etc. However, the cost breakdown they provide indicates training for staff and teachers. Without speaking with potential schools, they assume that schools have the funds to pay teachers and staff for this training (in-person and virtual) or to cover the cost of substitute teachers when classroom teachers are expected to be in training. They have estimated over $3.5 million in in-kind in this way and assume that schools will carry these costs. This is unrealistic and will either result in teachers being expected to attend training without compensation or the school having to cover costs for coverage.

The applicant budget provides support for travel but, again, does not provide any specific teacher stipend for attending training which will require that teachers attend without compensation during their personal time or that the district will be required to find funds to support paying teachers for their training time. (e263)

The budget also allocates over $10 million for performance-based compensation (e270), yet the narrative does not provide details or specifics about how each of these different incentives will be utilized and supported. For example, they note that each school will receive a stimulus incentive simply to agree to the partnership but do not discuss how they anticipate schools to use this money. There are also student growth incentives, teacher leader incentives, mentor incentives, etc., but no details about how people will be selected and supported in these roles. There is also no indication about how these incentives will be sustained beyond the life of the grant. These are incentives that will be given to teachers, schools, and leaders without any indication about how these will be maintained. This is a very big problem with the grant as a whole, since at the end of the three years there is no long-term change in the system, and the participating schools may see a departure of teachers when they are no longer able to support the increased funding.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**
   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant 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)   Elementary school.
      (2)   Middle school.
      (3)   High school.
      (4)   Career and technical education programs.

   b.   **That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:**
      (1)   Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-or-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.
      (2)   Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

   Strengths:

   Overview:
   The applicant has sufficiently addressed this competitive preference priority by designing a plan to support the development of new teachers who more closely match the student demographics as well as providing professional development for teachers to support cultural competency.

   Strengths:
   The applicant project design includes components to support schools and districts to address recruitment and retention needs, including increasing diversity. They also intend to focus on cultural competency as one of their teacher training elements. (e88-92)

   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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

Strengths:

Overview:
The applicant has sufficiently addressed this competitive preference priority. Their plan intends to support recruitment and retention through a variety of strategies including professional development as well as additional career advancement opportunities for teachers.

Strengths:
The applicant plan includes providing educator support through peer coaching, as well as providing the development of teacher leadership through the use of teacher leader mentors (e94) They also plan to develop career advancement opportunities through a staffing pipeline subgrant. Additionally, they intend to implement cultural competency and collective efficacy training as part of the faculty development workshop (e97).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/28/2023 02:59 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)
Reader #3:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	18
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	22
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	25
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	23
	Sub Total	100	88
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	5
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	5
	Sub Total	10	10
	Total	110	98

Panel #3 - TSL Panel - 3: 84.374A

Reader #3:   * * * * * * * * * *

Applicant: Arkansas Public School Resource Center, Inc. (S374A230001)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Need for Project (20 points)

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project. In determining evidence of the need for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(i)   The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.

(ii)   The extent to which the proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or policies supported by community, State, and Federal resources.

(iii)   The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

(iv)   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.

Strengths:

The project clearly identifies specific gaps within the need of the project and strategies to meet the needs are infused throughout the proposal. Collaborative partnerships with Arkansas State University will help to build on related efforts to improve outcomes funding resources. The use of PEER 2.0 will help to advance the targeted population to meet the goal for improving systemic changes.

i) Adequate evidence is provided to support gaps and weaknesses throughout the Need for the Project. (e17) Specifically, one deficiency indicates that the current educational improvement system in Arkansas is the lack of systemic efforts focused on retooling and increasing the effectiveness of human capital strategies. (e19) Another deficiency noted is the lack of systematic implementation of high-quality educational interventions. (e20) Additionally, the applicant noted that only 35.7% of identified high-need schools are meeting grade level standards in literacy. (e22)

ii) The PEER 2.0 model through APSRC will work collaboratively with Arkansas State University to help teachers who desire to increase their credentials. (e27). Additionally, the applicant proposes that Education Renewal Zone Educational Service Cooperatives, Teacher Practice Network and DESE Educator Support Office will support the effort of APSRC. (e27-e29)

iii) There is a Teaching and Learning (TL) team that participates in national and regional initiatives and annually trains 200 APSRC member districts. (e16) The applicant states that the team has several components to include: Teaching standards, Leadership Development, Increasing Educator Effectiveness, etc. (e30) A comprehensive long-term support plan that specifies the area of need, services to be provided and a memorandum of understanding is established. (e30) Teacher leaders will also be included to support their colleagues through professional development. (e33) A PEER team outlines several outcomes. For example:
-       Establishing the PEER 2.0 network

-       Improve data literacy and its use
-       Design a teacher recognition program

iv) The applicant provides a convincing execution plan that "removes barriers to systemic school improvement. (e36) Additionally, the applicant describes pairing the resources with the grant's resources to support high-quality learning in the classrooms. (e36) The applicant also emphasized that the Teacher Leadership role was established to offer career advancement opportunities in their schools and regions. (e37).

Weaknesses:

i) The applicant does not provide adequate information to determine how they are going to recruit highly qualified educators. Additionally, the number of coaches for schools may not be reasonable. For example, the project includes hiring four coaches to serve 45 schools. (e253)

ii) No weaknesses were noted.

iii) No weaknesses were noted.

iv) No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: **18**

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. **Quality of the Project Design (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:

   (i)   The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.
   (ii)   The extent to which the design of the proposed project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, a high-quality plan for project implementation, and the use of appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of project objectives.
   (iii)   The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

   Strengths:

   The rationale for the project clearly identifies the need for this applicant. If used as indicated in the proposal PEER 2.0 will support student and school improvement. Relevant literature and the use of methodological tools to achieve the project's objectives are included in the proposal. There is convincing evidence to describe the extent to which methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback to support the growth of the intended educators.

   i) The rationale is comprised of two components: teacher and student focus. (e38) According to the applicant, the student focus will grow student outcomes. (e38) In addition, the applicant provides adequate evidence that the PEER 2.0 model will provide resources and trainings to help targeted schools with opportunities to scale services within the state and beyond. (e39). Furthermore, PBCS and other resources will support system development, teacher recruitment and retention as well as student and school improvement. (e39).

   ii) The applicant provides relevant research that includes a high-quality review and plan for the project implementation.

For example: (Demonte, 2015, Hanushek and Rivkin, 2006) research shows that teachers are the most important school based factor affecting student achievement. (e40) Also, the proposal includes research conducted by (Hattie, 2015) which provides a research proven strategy that builds its influence on positive teacher student relationships, etc. (e41) The proposed grant includes utilizing the state evaluation system (TSS), State report card, and ESSA School Index to align the data and performance incentives. (e44). These tools are appropriate methodological tools to ensure successful achievement of objectives. (e44)

iii) The proposal includes adequate methods of evaluation to provide feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving the intended outcomes. For example: The feedback that will be leveraged through the TESS will regularly monitor the performance of classroom teachers, walk-throughs, direct and indirect observations (e44). Also, the PEER 2.0 model plans to periodically provide job embedded professional development on data analysis. (e45).

Weaknesses:

i) No weaknesses were noted.

ii) No weaknesses were noted.

iii) The evaluation plan states that the PEER 2.0 has evaluation methods that will ensure 1) performance feedback, and 2) analysis of evidence that the project is achieving its objectives and goals, but does not provide sufficient information to determine how this will occur.(e25)

Reader's Score: 22

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. Quality of the Management Plan (25 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 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 includes a sound management plan and provides responsible roles and implementation timeline for the proposed project with detailed milestones for accomplishing the project tasks. The strategies and best practices are clearly identified, and the management tasks are appropriately aligned to the timeline. (e48)

The project management plan includes an adequate description of strategies, best practices and an established calendar of events that provides access to data based on management tasks. (e47) The management plan includes the role and responsibility of the PEER 2.0 Project Director, as well as the APSRC staff and Executive Director. The Director of Finance and APSRC Executive Director will maintain a leadership role with the grant. (e48) The applicant provides a chart on page (e51) that outlines the major activities and milestones, key responsible staff and timeline for the activities. There is a key personnel chart that documents the resumes of the PEER 2.0 staff. (Appendix E)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. **Adequacy of Resources (30 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:

   (i)   The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.
   (ii)   The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.
   (iii)   The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it has the resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, including a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan; the demonstrated commitment of any partners; evidence of broad support from stakeholders (e.g., SEAs, teachers' unions) critical to the project's long-term success; or more than one of these types of evidence.

   Strengths:

   Detailed information summarizes that the proposed project will result in improvement through the examination of the incentive program. Additionally, the logic model provides strategies that are appropriate to addressing equity. The effective use of the standards for Arkansas' educators will promote professional growth for the educators in the targeted schools. (e54) The funding sources are appropriately aligned to the full implementation of the grant.

   i) The applicant provides evidence to support the likelihood the project will result in system improvement. For example, the proposed project includes an examination of the state incentive program and identifies a connection of resources supporting PEER 2.0. (e52) Additionally, the applicant states that the logic model has a strategy that is aligned to systems change with a focus on equity. (e52) The applicant provides an example of classroom walkthrough observations that will have specific focus areas aligned to the TESS framework and research based strategies.(e52)

   ii) The applicant promotes a reflective practice on data to result in changes in instructional practices to improve student learning. (e53) In addition, the use of DESE integrated with the Arkansas Teacher Leader Model Standards for Lead Designation is intended to promote the professional growth of teachers in target schools. (e54)

   iii) The proposed project has implications beyond the life of the grant to expand educational opportunities. For example, the applicant states that the model systematically grows sustainable structures and practices that allow for equitable, distributed leadership and staff ownership in the improvement process. (e53) Additionally, the applicant states that a part of the model was to provide a sustainability plan. Also, the funding requested will generate ASPRC to build and maintain a highly trained coaching cadre available to offer support services across the state. (e54).

   Weaknesses:

   i) No weaknesses were noted.

   ii) The applicant does not describe how they will develop their teacher leaders. (e42)

   iii) The number of coaches provided to support the implementation of the project is unreasonable based on the provided data. The proposal indicates that 4 coaches will serve 45 schools. (e253)

Reader's Score: 23

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Competitive Preference Priority 1:**
   Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities (Up to 5 points).

   Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate that the applicant 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)   Elementary school.
   (2)   Middle school.
   (3)   High school.
   (4)   Career and technical education programs.

   b.   That examines the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, and that may include one or more of the following:
   (1)   Increasing the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, in-field, and effective educators, and educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds or the communities they serve, to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities and are not taught at disproportionately higher rates by uncertified, out-or-field, and novice teachers compared to their peers.
   (2)   Improving the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools or shortage areas.

 Strengths:

The applicant's response to CPP 1 includes an adequate demonstration that the applicant proposes a project designed to promote educational equity in resources for underserved students. The applicant focuses on increasing the number of fully certified educators and the applicant provides adequate information suggesting the improvement of educators being placed in high-need schools.

The applicant presents data identified by the PEER team that includes 119 high-need traditional public school and charter schools who have utilized teachers who are not fully certified in the last three years. (e87) The applicant provides historical data stating the identified schools had some of the lowest salary schedules for teachers and a disproportionate number of openings in the critical academic shortage areas identified by DESE. (e88) The applicant focused on how the HCM system will significantly address issues of recruitment and retention of high-quality, diverse educators to the PEER 2.0 districts and increase their capabilities to become academically aligned and student focused educational environments. (e95) Additionally, the applicant proposes that the grant resources will be used to assist the district in developing a HCMS to retain staff, implement a teacher career pathway, and reduce the number of staff who are not fully certified. (e37)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were 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 5 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, by developing data systems, timelines, and action plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices that promote and support development of educator diversity.

    Strengths:

    The proposed project, PEER 2.0 is designed to increase the proportion of diverse educators serving students through expanding school districts that place non-certified educators in the high-need schools (e96). The applicant developed a data system that incorporates timelines, action plans and support the development of educator diversity.

    The applicant proposes defining priorities and actions for implementation related to recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff. (e99). Strategies for implementation for the plan includes:
    -          Providing recruitment resources
    -          Convening an advisory group of school participants and partners
    -          Training school leaders
    -          Rewarding the school and teacher leaders
    -          Presenting annual performance data to partners. (e100-101).
    If the suggested priorities and actions for implementation are effectively implemented, APSRC can possibly increase filling teacher vacancies and retain staff for the district.

    Weaknesses:

    There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted
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