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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	20
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	25
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	28
	Sub Total	100	88
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	1
	Sub Total	10	4
	Total	110	92

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)

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 application demonstrates a need for the project in adequate ways. It adequately describes their gaps/weaknesses which include teacher salaries/compensation not comparable to surrounding/neighboring school districts, a decline in the number of new teachers who are prepared for the job and the lack of a diverse teaching staff. The application adequately describes how the GREAT Project will build on similar efforts using existing funding streams through the LEADS Act and NIET. The application adequately addresses how the project is a part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching. However, it is limited as it relates to the support for rigorous academic standards for students. There is also limited discussion on how the project will address all the needs that were originally stated.

   (i)   The proposal has adequately identified gaps or weakness by sharing the following information: (1) an increase in the number of economically disadvantaged students, with 73% qualifying for free or reduced lunch, 18% homelessness, (2) Teacher salaries and compensation are not comparable to neighboring districts with $2K-$5K difference (3) a decline in new teachers being prepared and (4) attracting and retaining a diverse and effective workforce (e18 – e21)
   (ii)   The project includes an adequate description of existing funds that will be used through (1) The Learns Act which will provide up to $10,000 annually to teachers meeting performance standards (2) adding the newly created Lead Professional Educator designation and (3) raising the minimum teacher salary to $50,000. (e21 – 24)
   (iii)   The project includes the implementation of the "evidence-based TAP system" and a partnership with NIET to improve teaching and learning. The NIET project, efforts by the state, and an emphasis on faculty and staff, all point to a concerted effort to enhance teaching and learning. NIETs focuses on teacher and admin skill improvement which will concurrently raise student achievement (e25)
   (iv)   The project will offer on-site support to district leaders through quarterly coaching and support sessions. They will provide monthly school leader training and support sessions for training on evaluation and leadership practices. Monthly meetings will be required for teacher leaders to deepen their understanding of instructional practices so that they may lead impactful professional learning sessions for teachers with varying levels of experience (e26)

Weaknesses:

(i)   No weakness noted.

(ii)   No weakness noted.

(iii)   The project lacks a discussion on exactly how the use of the TAP system and NIET will directly impact learning and supports rigorous academic standards for students (e18-26).

(iv)   The project does not address how they will meet the need to try to attract a more diverse population of educators, which was stated as one of their priorities (e18-26).

Reader's Score: 15

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 proposed project presented an adequate rationale with the use of the TAP System and the school level GREAT Strategies. The project seeks to expand formal career advancement opportunities for effective teachers; strengthen job-embedded, professional learning opportunities for educators; implement fair teacher and school leader evaluation processes that are coupled with specific and actionable feedback; and improve performance-based compensation systems for teachers and school leaders. (p. e27).

Strengths:

(i)   The project has an adequate rationale. It proposes that implementation of the GREAT program will require an approach that requires developing the skills of their current educators and improving recruitment and retention of effective and diverse educators. The desired result will be achieved through the increased support, opportunities for educators to have leadership roles and increased compensation (e27)

(ii)   The applicant cites the positive impact that TAP has had across multiple grade levels, locations, and years on school leaders, teachers, and student outcomes (e30) attributed to four elements, multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation (e30 – e32). The project provides adequate strategies along with key activities to support those strategies (e34-e45)

(iii)   The applicant proposes that evaluation of the project be led by NIET's Research and Evaluation Department. NIET will supply grant partners with data to improve the project and assess its impacts (e45). There will be an annual review which will include interviews of school and district personnel to assess perceived quality of the program and its impact. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded by two researchers. Qualitative and quantitative will be gathered to determine what effects participation in the program had on teacher, principal and school leader outcomes, student achievement, administrative records (open positions, new hires, and teacher/school leader demographics. (e45).

Weaknesses:

(i)   No weakness noted

(ii)   No weakness noted

(iii)   The applicant suggests that the NIET evaluator can identify program implementation measures for tracking training sessions, attendance, and engagement, however, does not state what those measures (tools) will be (e45)

Reader's Score: 20

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 quality of the management plan is exemplary to achieve the objectives of the proposed project and remain within the desired budget. There is a clear timeline for when tasks will be completed and the roles and responsibilities of those who are expected to complete the tasks (e48 – 52).

Strengths:
The applicant proposes to serve as the fiscal agent for the grant. The district has prior success serving as fiscal agent which will aid in implementation of the project responsibilities and milestones. (e47)
The individuals listed as the key personnel have a wide range of experience that will be necessary for the implementation of the project including being recognized as a transformative leader, being an expert in the TAP System and being a financial overseer for two decades(e48).
There are clear milestones and tasks that the project wishes to accomplish during the grant and those tasks as well as the individuals responsible for completing them are listed. The applicant wishes to complete the project start up by the end of quarter 1. Part of that start up includes establishing an advisory board and PBCS committee (e49).
Establishing a committee, another milestone, will assist with recruiting, interviewing and hiring master teachers (e50).
The project has a clearly defined budget and allocation of funds as well as the Cross Country SD and NIET willing to match funds along with the grant to achieve desired outcomes. (e.88-89)
The project is aligned to the logic model (e49) with clear strategies and outcomes and timelines to ensure completion of objectives (e59).

Weaknesses:

No weakness 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:

Overview: It is likely that the project will result in system change or improvement based on the work that has already started within the district, having key players in place who are familiar with the work and who have experience working with TAP and NIET. Based on letters attached to the application there is "buy-in" from teachers, parents, staff, and district leadership.

Strengths:
(i)   It is highly likely that the project will result in system change due to the elements that are currently in place. The district already has a superintendent who has experience implementing the TAP System, school board members who are committed to the work, a program coordinator, and school leaders who are familiar with TAP and NIET principal standards, and 2 master teachers and 4 mentors in place. (p. e52)
(ii)   It is highly likely that the project will build local capacity and address the needs of the target population because of support from NIET as well as district level coaches. This instructional support will help the district to provide professional learning and coaching to both school leaders and teachers.
(iii)   The applicant has demonstrated that there will be resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant, evidenced by funding from the district leaders (50%) in addition to in-kind support from NIET valued at $45,000 per year (e. 88-89)

 Weaknesses:
(iv)   No evidence of sustainability of funds and community support beyond the grant (e54-55)

Reader's Score: 28

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 proposes a project that will promote educational equality for students in K-12 setting. The project is looking to increase the number of diverse, effective, and prepared educators for their school district and is seeking to improve retention of effective educators.

Strengths:
This project proposes to promote education equity for students in a rural school district in elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) schools, with an 18% homeless rate and a population of 70% receiving free/reduced lunch. The project seeks to accomplish this by increasing the number of effective educators within their district, which services an underserved population. (e16)

Weaknesses:

The project does mention developing a recruitment plan for student interns (e34), however it does not provide a clear plan for recruitment of diverse teachers, although they have clearly stated that there is a need with "approximately 4% of teachers of color and 11% of students are of color." (p e21)

Reader's Score: 3

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: This project is designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared and effective educators serving students in a rural district with 73% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The project is looking to increase their capacity with the use of the TAP System, NIET and performance-based compensation.

Strengths:
The project is a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and to increase the number of effective teachers by using the NIET's evidence-based TAP System to strengthen instructional practices and to use educator performance results to inform school and district level decisions (e13).

Weaknesses:

There is no clear plan for developing data systems, timelines, and actions plans for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resources practices listed in this project (e13).

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/31/2023 08:12 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/31/2023 06:48 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)
Reader #2:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	15
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	20
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	25
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	25
	Sub Total	100	85
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	1
	Sub Total	10	4
	Total	110	89

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)

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:

   i. The proposed project identifies current gaps and weaknesses in services and infrastructure, such as many homeless and Title I students; inadequate teacher professional development; inequitable teacher compensation and evaluations; and the inability to attract and retain a diverse and effective workforce. These gaps will be addressed by the proposed project's emphasis on teacher professional development, the design and implementation of a more equitable teacher evaluation system, and the recognition and attention to the system by which teachers will be recognized. (pg. e19-e21)
   ii. The proposed GREAT Project identifies strategies, activities, and objectives that it will use to build upon the work that the district is currently engaged in to establish a more effective educator evaluation system. By building upon and expanding existing strategies, the project will enhance the district's performance-based evaluation system. This integration and expansion will also support new teacher instruction and a stronger compensation system, which will lead to expanded opportunities for teacher leadership roles. (pg. e13)
   ii. The project is aligned to the existing newly created Lead Professional Educator Program; the state's LEARNS Act and the Merit Teacher incentive Program. These initiatives are focused on professional development and teacher performance-based compensation, using existing state and federal funding streams, such as Title and IDEA funds. Ensuring both state and federal funding is essential to provide additional funding sources for the project. (e21-e23)
   iii. The proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning, via quarterly and monthly district leader coaching, provided by NIET to provide support for rigorous academic standards for students. The proposal will support the implementation of the TAP system to drive and support human capital, in order to increase the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders in support of teaching and learning. The project highlights the strong partnership between the school district and NIET, a nationally recognized organization with a 20-year track record for improving student achievement, and narrowing the achievement gap, particularly among economically disadvantaged students. (pg. e22-e25).

Weaknesses:

Iv. The proposal does not specifically state how its design will successfully address the needs of the target population or other identified needs. Specifically, the proposal does not address what types of Professional Learning will be provided to teachers and school leaders, or what methods will be employed to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. (pg. e26)

iv. The proposed plan does not address how student achievement will be positively impacted by the strategies employed. (pg. e26)

Reader's Score: 15

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:

i. The proposed design project demonstrates a clear rationale to address the concerns regarding few teachers of color in the workforce, low teacher retention, inequitable teacher evaluation and compensation which continues to impact low academic performance among its students (e27).

ii. The proposal provides a thorough and high-quality literature review, which addresses the four-prong approach of the proposal's design, linking the TAP system and GREAT strategies. (pg. e27-33). The proposal also discusses methodological tools that will be employed by NIET to support and evaluate staff which include coaching, progress monitoring, both qualitative and quantitative data sources to encourage triangulation of the data which will improve reliability, rigor and ensure integrity of the process and consistent, valid, and reliable data. (pg. e38, e45-47). As well, the proposed use of EE PASS and CODE for evaluation and periodic feedback, provides tools to help plan Professional Development, inform teacher retention, and improve performance-based teacher/leader retention. (pg. e40-44)

iii. The proposed project's conceptual framework and detailed evaluation plan will provide actionable feedback by providing immediate feedback to teachers, teacher leaders and school leaders, as well as providing information for both the state and national leaders, as well as at Congressional Hearings. The evaluator will incorporate findings into the annual performance reports to address progress toward key performance measures. Periodic assessment of progress toward achieving the intended goal of the proposal are to be performed throughout the project. (pg. e45-e47).

Weaknesses:

iii. The rationale does not completely address the entire intended population (e.g., students) and how academic achievement among economically depressed students will be increased/positively impacted (pg. e45).

Reader's Score: 20

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 project provides a clear roadmap for project implementation by aligning key benchmarks against outputs and outcomes outlined in its Logic Model. (pg. e49)

The project also clearly highlights timelines, responsibilities, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. (pg. e49)

The key personnel assigned to the proposed project stem from multiple departments within the organization, which suggests an opportunity for the project to have a systemic impact on the organization's overall operation, as well as key personnel who have a history of holding prior positions and performing admirably. (pg. e48).

The quality of the management plan described by the applicant is adequate to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, as the associated key personnel, their responsibilities and salary are clearly laid out. (pg. e88-89; e153)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

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:

i. The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement, is evidenced using multiple observation and action-oriented feedback cycles for both principals and teachers, allowing observation data to determine

what professional learning is needed. The implementation of a teacher PCDs that is based on multiple performance metrics to improve teacher instruction will impact student learning. (pg. e37-42)

ii. The proposed project incorporates a systems-approach to collaboration and team building which will result in building capacity among both teachers and leaders by building cohorts of teacher-leaders within the district that will address the needs of the target population (pg. e53)

The project has positioned itself to ensure key (i.e., Principal Investigator, Project Director and Treasurer) contributors are well-trained and have multiple years in managing/participating in prior federal grants of this magnitude. (pg. e32, e52)
iii. The project addresses a multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan. The proposal notes the commitment of community partners, the district (via greater than a 50% match) and particularly, NIET, which is providing yearly in-kind support which will help sustain the project. (pg. e55)

Weaknesses:

ii. The proposed project does not adequately address how building capacity within the district will provide, improve, or expand services that address the specific needs of the targeted population (i.e., disadvantaged students). For example, how will the implementation of teacher PCD's positively support the academic success of students. (pg. e54)

Reader's Score: 25

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:

    (2) The project design outlines methods to improve the retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in high-need schools/shortage areas, via the use of the TAP (GREAT) design to increase teacher training, compensation, and retention. (pg. e23)

Weaknesses:

(1) The recruitment of a diverse workforce is not addressed. Although the applicant notes that the majority of students will complete their entire elementary school education, without having one teacher of color; and the project has a strong focus on increasing the number of certified teachers of color - the project does not specifically state how recruitment will be accomplished. (pg. e 21).

Reader's Score: 3

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 project is designed to increase the proportion of well-prepared, effective educators serving disadvantaged students, via high professional growth support (pg. e34-35).

Weaknesses:

The project is not designed to increase the capacity to hire, support and retain an effective and diverse educator workforce. Moreover, no specific timelines and action plans, were noted for promoting inclusive and bias-free human resource practices that promote and support development of a diverse teacher workforce. (pg. e55)

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/31/2023 06:48 PM

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/31/2023 06:11 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)
Reader #3:   **********

		Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Need for Project			
1. Need		20	16
Quality of Project Design			
1. Project Design		25	21
Quality of the Management Plan			
1. Management Plan		25	25
Adequacy of Resources			
1. Resources		30	28
	Sub Total	100	90
Priority Questions			
Competitive Preference Priority			
Competitive Preference Priority 1			
1. Promoting Equity		5	3
Competitive Preference Priority 2			
1. Diverse Workforce		5	1
	Sub Total	10	4
	Total	110	94

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Cross County School District (S374A230010)

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 is partnering with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) to improve teacher and administrator effectiveness and student achievement at two high-need schools in a rural district. (e13) Previous upgrades such as a framework for the human capital management system, will be incorporated and augmented throughout the project. Evidence of support from appropriate groups is documented. Gaps and weaknesses in services were provided with well-documented evidence of magnitude. (e18) The project is comprehensive in nature and should provide the desired educator and student achievement goals.

   Strengths:
   (i)   Specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, and opportunity have been identified and discussed in detail. Project goals align to strategies to remediate the gaps and weaknesses found. Shortcomings addressed in this project include conditions affecting teacher turnover and shortages and low student performance exacerbated by poverty. (e16) The magnitude of the teacher shortages and the level of poverty among the students has been well-documented. (e18)
   (ii)   The project will build on a previously augmented Human Capital Management System and utilize the work of NIET to expand career opportunities, support professional learning, and provide fair evaluation processes with performance-based compensations. (e17) It also supports the LEARNS Act and Lead Professional Educator designations approved by the State. (e21-24) Current funding streams such as Title I and II will be utilized.
   (iii)   Through the NIET GREAT Project, the initiatives of the State, and the focus toward faculty and staff by the applicant, a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning is evident. The focus on improving teacher and administrator skills and compensation has been shown by NIET to simultaneously improve student achievement. (e24-26)
   (iv)   The applicant's focus is on ongoing teacher and leader training and professional development opportunities that should support student achievement thus meeting the critical needs of the district. (e26)

Weaknesses:

(i)   Some documentation appears to be older than ten years. More recent research would validate the processes chosen to meet the needs of educators and students. (e17, e21-26)

(ii)   No weaknesses noted.

(iii)   No weaknesses noted.

(iv)   The applicant has not made a direct correlation to the concepts and skills utilized in the teacher and leader training that will translate to addressing the needs of all the children in the district. The need appears to be present, but a clear explanation of how the project will meet learning needs is missing (e26). A plan to recruit educators with diverse backgrounds to more clearly align with student demographics was not presented (e24-26).

Reader's Score: 16

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 a rationale that supports the foundation of the project's five goals. (e27-29) A wide array of relevant research is provided, however, several of the references are not current and not considered seminal research. The project plan is well-documented and sequential. The evaluation is sensible given the scope of the project and the size of the applicant's district.

Strengths:

(i)   A rationale was presented and is consistent with the goals and design of the project. Relevant and convincing research and literature citations were provided. (e27-29)

(ii)   The plans for project implementation are supported by the evidence found in the literature which creates a solid foundation for the success of the project and for continuation of meaningful research. Much detail was provided on the strategies for the project including how leaders are chosen and trained; and recruitment, training, and compensation strategies. (e34-45)

(iii)   A competent evaluator trained in the observation protocol and versed in the project components is in place to help ensure success and appropriate documentation. Qualitative and quantitative measures will be aligned to project outcomes. (e45; e132-135) A detailed Logic Model showcasing resources, strategies, outputs, and long- and short-term outcomes supports the project and evaluation efforts. (e59) Local, state, and national dissemination is planned. (e46-47)

Weaknesses:

(i)   References that support the rationale and literature review are often not very current and are often not seminal research. (e27; e31-32) The rationale does not address how students will be impacted. (e31-35)

(ii)   Little is mentioned regarding the strength of the performance rubrics or their validation or reliability. (e94-116) The make-up and the purpose of the committee is not clear. It is uncertain how it is different than the Board. (e44) The

applicant mentions that a key objective is to hire a more diverse faculty. Yet, there are no details of how candidates of diverse backgrounds will be recruited.

(iii)   No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 21

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 quality of the management plan is stellar. Project personnel are experienced in their roles and provided appropriate time to carry out their duties. (e48) Project objectives are linked to appropriate time sequences with milestones for accomplishing project tasks outlined. (e49-68)

Strengths:
A clear delineation of qualifications and services to be provided were presented for key personnel. (e47-48; e61-68) A well-organized table was provided documenting tasks and milestones by quarter, key personnel to perform each task, and a complete timeline. (e49-52) The partnership between the applicant and NIET is strong as evidenced by the numerous strategies that they jointly will complete. For instance, the two will collaborate on such strategies as kickoff leadership meeting, data-driven implementation workshops, and school reviews. The budget is detailed and appropriate for the population served by the project. (e85; e153-177) It is likely the objectives will be achieved for this project on time and on budget. Key elements in place to support successful completion are strong partnerships, a clear vision, and structures in place in the schools and NIET that will provide the framework for many of the project's goals. The applicant has met the 50% match requirement. (e47-52)

 Weaknesses:

No weaknesses 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:

Overview:

A clear vision and qualified staff to achieve that vision are in place to help ensure the successful completion of this project. System change is likely due to detailed planning, quality of faculty, adequacy of resources, and support from multiple stakeholders. (e52-54) Partnerships appear to have a strong commitment through allocation of funds and in-kind support. Feedback is planned in an ongoing and timely manner.

Strengths:

(i)   It is likely that the proposed project will result in system change and improvement. Personnel are well-qualified, resources and support are given, and there is a clear vision and plan for its success. (e52-53)

(ii)   Project staff have a clear vision of what project success will entail. That vision includes capacity building through stakeholder buy-in, accessibility to appropriate personnel and resources, and a clear vision to achieve intended outcomes. (e53-54)

(iii)   Sustainability is inherent in the way the applicant has planned the project. Currently, some district and federal funds are being used to support the initial workings of the project. Current commitments already exceed the required match. (e70-89) Time to implement the project components is in place for such activities as meetings, coaching, and training. A strong communication protocol is in place that will provide a broad array of feedback to appropriate stakeholders. (e54-55)

Weaknesses:

(i)   No weaknesses noted.

(ii)   No weaknesses noted.

(iii)   Though mentioned in the narrative, little information is provided regarding the attainment and continuation of community support to build capacity. (e54-55)

Reader's Score: 28

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 documented a plan to increase educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students. (e13) The project serves two high-need schools with documented needs of teacher support services and training to increase retention and effectiveness of educators.

Strengths:

a.   The project is designed to provide better trained teachers and leaders and to enhance learning opportunities for rural students. The activities will take place in a rural school district housing 2 high-need schools. One is an elementary school. The other is a high school. (e13)
b.   The applicant documented the need to hire and support fully qualified teachers in the district to augment the learning of the district's students.
The sustained teacher and leader training with supportive coaching and advancement opportunities are likely to improve retention of fully certified, experienced, and effective educators in the high-need schools. (e17; e20-21; e36-40)

Weaknesses:

(a)   No weaknesses noted.
(b)   The applicant indicated that the number and proportion of experienced, fully certified, educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds would be recruited to ensure that underserved students have educators from those backgrounds and communities, but failed to provide evidence of how recruitment of those educators would be achieved. (e20-21; e36-40)

Reader's Score: 3

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 documented a plan to support a more diverse workforce and professional growth, as a means to increase educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students. (e13; e34-35)

Strengths:
The applicant's proposal should lead to heightened educator training for both teachers and administrators that will enhance the likelihood that effective teaching will take place in the two schools and that student achievement will increase. Best practices such as clear evaluation of performance, coaching, and professional learning opportunities will be utilized to bring about heightened teacher effectiveness. A data system will be developed. A clear plan for the project was provided. (e34-45)

Weaknesses:

The applicant indicated that a more diverse teaching and administrative staff was needed to align to the district's students' demographic, but failed to provide evidence of how recruitment of those educators would be achieved. (e36; e43)

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/31/2023 06:11 PM