



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0093OH-1 for ESC of Cuyahoga County

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The plan is of reasonable quality if professional development was the only area that needed to be addressed. The vision and the theory of change of the applicant was not discussed. Several partnerships were discussed that would support and provide training to staff in various areas and resources available for teaching. The applicant is a consortium of seven school districts and the regional service center as the fiscal agent that agree that a critical component to the success of student graduating from high school is having educational success in middle school therefore the focus of this proposal will be on middle school to grade 9 students and professional development for school leadership. There is an extensive focus on collaborative leadership to build effective teachers and principal in areas of personalized learning environments and the district teams for curriculum, instruction, and assessments. There was little discussion regarding personalized learning with goals that would accelerate student learning nor incorporation on academic interests. The core educational assurances in reference to the proposal was not discussed. The applicant did not respond to what a classroom experience would be like for a student served by this project.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium of districts focus on middle school actually covers grades 4 to 12 serving over 9,700 students within the seven districts per data charts provided. There is a breakdown by district which schools will be included in the proposal. The applicant did not indicate how the schools were selected within each district to be served and it is unclear if all meet eligibility requirements to be served. For example, if schools were low-performing, served the highest number of students from low-income families, or if schools served English language learners.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	0
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not discuss scaling the project to all schools in the region or all schools within each district in the consortium.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Since the applicant did not provide a clear vision for the proposal it was difficult to connect the state assessment results provided for each district to how the students to be served would meet or exceed state standards. The data provided show a projected increase over the period of the grant for example in Bedford School District 4th grade reading results would increase 2% to 3% annually for two years then remaining at 95% for the next three years. The graduation rates, per the charts provided are in good standing for many of the districts for example Cuyahoga School District baseline was 96.2% projected to increase to 100% by the end of the grant and Garfield School District 86.5% to 94.5%. Warrensville School District had the lowest graduation rate of 59.9% baseline and projected to 85% by grants end which would be a significant impact. Data was omitted for one school in the consortium.</p>		

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

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	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant did not adequately respond to this criterion. It is a service provider to many districts in its region yet did not discuss any documented success it has had with improving student academic outcomes or closing the achievement gap for districts served. The success the districts have had in this area was not clearly articulated or covered a four year period. Bedford had success with initiatives it put in place to covering a three year period that decreased the number of students retained in 9th grade and Garfield had some success with increasing graduation rates tracking a 9th grade cohort.</p> <p>All of the districts in the proposal have various media where student performance data and school activities would be made available for use by staff in planning and providing instruction; parents for two-way communications with schools; and community/partners for support and feedback. Various media include electronic via districts websites, social media, Google Apps for Edu that teachers and students access; district television broadcasts; hardcopy/newsletters; and reports at principal meetings. The applicant as the fiscal agent did not indicate if any links to its website would connect to the districts' performance data.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant (fiscal agent) stated that all the districts in the consortium and the applicant has monthly financials posted on the websites of actual salaries for all staff, instructional and support staff, instructional staff only, and expenditures for non-personnel. This information is also available to anyone upon request to each district or the fiscal agent. The applicant did not provide evidence to support its statements regarding salaries and expenditures for all members being available. For example there were no websites provided of the members or a copy of annual financial reports showing all income and expenses.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	5
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is piloting many of the components of the proposal through the consortium of districts. It has stated in broad terms that certain federal mandates such as Adequate Yearly Progress being replaced and the elimination of supplemental education services which are tutorial services for struggling students without effective dates or statute citations for documentation therefore it is difficult to determine if all the districts in the consortium have sufficient autonomy to implement the proposal. The districts have the option of requesting State waivers to certain barriers they may be faced with that impedes their ability to serve students and plan to submit such waivers but the barriers were not discussed.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	5
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant documented support for the proposal through memorandums of understanding from teacher unions and letters of support from partners. It is however unclear if either group was involved in the planning the proposal. There was no documentation to support that the proposal/plan was shared with parents and students or if they provided any input.</p>		

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	8
<p>(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each district in the consortium will create a District Design Team that will work with the Fiscal Agent, ESC, in the proposal using their specific student data and needs to develop personalized learning for students in grades 4-9. The supportiveness of the ESC is evident by the professional development for the teams in providing alternative organization of staff time since staff having adequate time to plan together is a major component that would ensure success for students. Each team however appears to work independent of the ESC in planning student activities and parent engagement that would make it difficult for the ESC to providing management of the proposal as described. There was not any discussion as</p>		

to how districts would document that parents have input or be involved in implementing personalized plans created by the District Design Team.

Adequate research was provided showing the critical nature of students being successful in middle school to keep them on track for graduation from high school but the proposal does not discuss inclusion of strategies that will ensure it happens since each district team appears to be in isolation as they develop their own projects, strategies, and approaches to ensure these students would be college-and-career ready. Also, there was not any data from each district documenting that their middle school students were identified with the risk factors of not being on track for graduation.

The applicant discussed and provided attachments of various models supported by research to be successful in educating students such as the Deeper Learning model that includes student-centered approaches but did not clearly indicate that it would be used by any of the districts in the consortium.

A partner, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, outlined the five excellent strategies that would be incorporated into the consortium or at the district-level to serve students to increase academic achievement such as strategy 1 that would provide alignment and various opportunities for content mastery in the core curriculum as a student advance from one grade to the next. Also important and supportive of learning for students and staff is the professional development that would be provided for staff so that they may more effectively integrate instructional technology in their classroom instruction, assessments, and in creating extended learning opportunities for students. It is unclear if these services would be provided by the partner or the ESC.

The applicant offers a lot of research to prepare middle school student to be college and career ready such as mastery of course content beyond seat time that include competency-based learning and credit flexibility but does not clearly indicate that these strategies will be implemented in some or all of the districts in the consortium.

The applicant currently provides programs, workshops, and summer institutes that provide students and teachers the opportunity to learn and gain the perspectives of other cultures through these sessions being led by presenters who have expertise in various cultures such as the English language learners network workshop. Since districts have participated in the past and may choose this as an avenue to expose students to various cultural learning opportunities makes it available but not clearly a part of the proposal. The applicant has indicated the area the proposal will serve has a diverse population but does not appear to utilize those various backgrounds as learning experiences for students and staff.

It is the responsibility of each District Design Team to develop personalized plans for students, decide on classroom instruction that would result in students mastering content and developing skills to be considered college-and-career ready, and instructional approaches therefore this was described or sample provided a district. There was research provided from Hanover, 2012 that effective personalized learning requires regular feedback to students on their progress but the proposal does not indicate if or how this will occur within the consortium. There is a feedback and monitoring of the effectiveness of personalized learning for students and staff in the Moving Your Numbers District Self-Assessment Guide that would be utilized for all consortium district teams but little information was provided about the content of the Guide. Therefore, it is unclear the focus on the feedback, if it would student or teacher specific, review of professional development, or all.

The applicant did not discuss training for students or parents on personalized learning. Since much of the design of implementation of the personalized learning environment will be the responsibility of each District Design Team to create, there was not any discussion regarding how the programs would make accommodations or what accommodations would be made for students with special needs.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	12
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(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

There are several opportunities and support for teachers and administrators to participate in training on personalized learning environments that would be offered by the applicant and its national partners therefore providing districts with age-appropriate instructional approaches, materials including access to multiple vendors that provide technology and training, and feedback mechanisms that staff could set individual as well as group goals.

The applicant also has a state level support team that provide services to schools in the region that have a school improvement plan to implement would be available to serve consortium districts with professional development which may also aid districts in creating individualized professional development plan since this team would be familiar with some of their challenges and needs.

The use of a coaching model is an excellent way to provide teachers with examples of ways to adapt classroom instruction for all students, how to integrate technology in lessons, and implement the newly adopted Common Core and College-and-Career Readiness standards. Utilization of this model will be project with experienced instructional coaches would also provide immediate feedback to teachers in one-on-one settings and allow them to practice strategies or teaching

techniques to the classroom teacher.

The fiscal agent is the lead trainer of educators to receive appropriate licensure to evaluate teachers under the new teacher evaluation system that would provide teachers with information focusing on their strengths and providing meaningful ways to target specific areas of improvement which is one excellent approach to building effective teachers; the system will be implemented in 2014-15. The applicant did not discuss how this would be addressed in the meantime. The system to evaluate administrators was adopted in 2009 but is unclear if it is being implemented.

The applicant has an extensive list of partners that will work with the consortium in various capacities including the North Coast Council that will provide training to the districts on the state's instructional improvement system. The system was developed to improve instruction therefore districts will learn how to do instructional planning and well as create and analyze interim assessments to target student improvement.

The applicant plans to assist schools in identifying resources that would foster the college-and career readiness skills needed for students to be successful but there was little to no discussion as to what the resources would be even though the applicant would be to direct schools to vendors with quality products and pricing.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	5
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant provided a vague discussion of this criterion. Since districts will need to make the decision regarding polices and rules for the personalized plans they develop, this information was not shared in the proposal or an example of what it may look like in one of the participating districts. Once each district selects their leadership teams, the applicant has adequate partners that will provide professional development and support them in collaboration across districts. The applicant's decision structure primarily affects activities in the project that are considered consortium would include all participating schools in any final decisions therefore schools would maintain their autonomy regarding scheduling, staffing, school-level budgets, and roles of staff.</p> <p>Although some of the schools in the consortium have not implemented Credit Flex, it has been approved by the state as a way for students to master content other than seat time. Students would be provided opportunities to master content in various ways of which one avenue has been made available to students in grades 8 and 9 may participate in summer academies which is a component of the consortium project that would utilize other resources and instructional strategies to ensure students move forward successful through high school.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Since each district will work within its community to build local partnerships, the local libraries and YMCA are community entities supporting ways to extend learning time for students and provide computer access for students and parents. This support would provide parents with other options to access district website to access links to educational resources that may be shared by their school that would enhance learning for their students. It is unclear if information would be made available from the fiscal agent to parents, students, or community stakeholders.

Each district within the consortium will conduct needs assessments that will also include the level of technical support available in the district through its instructional technology unit. Where gaps occur, the applicant have as a partner with North Coast Council IT Center that would provide some but primarily in the area of professional development for staff not to parents or students.

The student information systems currently utilized within the consortium schools include a password to access student progress reports, gradebooks, etc. yet the schools have not fully implemented training for parents to access this information. Parents would need internet access if planning to view data from home but it was not discussed as to how many districts have this information. Some districts are using Google Apps for Education which is free for students and teachers to access yet internet service would also be needed from home of students to benefit from this service after school or possibly extended hours of a local library.

For the districts within the consortium that are currently being served with the RTTT state funds, a common interoperable

data system has been created and will be available in 2015 but not available to every district in the proposal therefore each district will utilize whatever current system they have in place but will have the opportunity to learn about the system and will receive other resources from the state.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each District Design Team will address continuous improvement utilizing the National Association of Secondary School Principals Breaking Framework, copy provided. This process allows each district in the consortium to assign staff to components of the framework to collect and analyze data; the frequency of feedback to improve plan and method of receiving feedback; and how information will be shared with the public therefore there was little discussion as to how this will occur. Since each district will be working independent of the fiscal agent in setting up and implementing their plan, monitoring of the continuous improvement cycle by the fiscal agent was not discussed. It was not discussed how the fiscal agent, the applicant, would share information regarding its investment in the professional development that would be conducted with districts in the consortium.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Each district will develop relationships within its boundaries and determine its methods of ongoing communication with district personnel and stakeholders including parents therefore what this would look like is yet to be determined. The applicant did not provide guidelines for district to support the personalized learning environments that would be created to support ongoing communication or its experience with engaging stakeholders in a project of this size.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant is in a RTTT State that has mandated the use of a teacher and principal evaluation system that would identify staff as highly effective and effective by 2014-15 which has not yet occurred therefore the applicant indicated that it does not have baseline data to include growth projections in the application.</p> <p>The seven performance measures presented in this section most lack baseline data for 2012-13 school year therefore the applicant did not make projections. Data was not provided but the only subgroups identified were African American, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged when other subgroups are being served. The measures did not indicate the total number of students participating in the project.</p> <p>The successful predictability of the EXPLORE and ENGAGE assessments with middle students of being academically ready for college will be administered by each district in the consortium and chosen due to supportive research. This will cover two measures for the 4-8 group in measuring college and career readiness even though none of districts in the consortium have baseline data but did not discuss how or if other methods had be used in the past to collect these types of data.</p> <p>There were seven performance measures described not at least 12.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant was non-responsive to this criterion.</p>		

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The amount requested for the project is within the framework of the competition for the number of students to be served.

A full-time project director at the fiscal agent level is adequate of oversee such a large project with support staff in place as well.

The categories of the budget are unclear and confusing for example \$170,000 in year one and \$70,000 in subsequent years is budgeted under 'other' and no description of planned use or explanation is included. As an ESC there are many fees associated with the services they provide but it would be clearer if there was an explanation of why as the fiscal agent of the project that a fee would be charged for district teams to meet in its facility and for professional development offered to the consortium. The contractors in the project will receive approximately \$3 million dollars per year for the services they will provide which seems high since many of the contractors are partners.

The applicant did not clearly indicate other funding sources for the project. It was difficult to connect the project's budgets to the project since they were not identified in the proposal separately. A budget narrative was not clearly provided. The applicant did provide some explanation of the use of funds within the individual project budgets. The applicant did delineate between one-time investments and ongoing project operational cost.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

2

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not describe an adequate sustainability plan due to advisory boards needing to come together and develop a plan. The members would be selected from within the county with a varied representation of members that include persons from foundations, local governmental entities, education, health and human services providers, businesses, and the advisory board for the project. Since the group would develop the plan, the applicant also did not indicate the areas that would be covered such as sustaining the project goals, financial support after the grant ends, or improvements.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	8

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's recognition that adolescents bring developmental issues to school that may impede their learning proposes a good plan to identify and address those developmental factors through leveraging partners and services. The middle school students in the consortium districts remain the focus in this endeavor to address their social and emotional needs as they move toward meeting college-and-career standards. The Search Institute's Development Assets model will be implemented by partners that include the institute, the Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State University, Family and Children First Council of Cuyahoga County and Starting Point, Juvenile Court, and others to identify risk and protective factors that affect student behavior.

The plan cited research that supports a list of protective factors positive behaviors that students need that support academic success therefore enabling students have positive outcomes is key as well as reducing those risk factors that prevent students from moving forward academically and emotionally. The data that would be gathered and analyzed from the Me and My World survey to be administered annually to students grades 4 to 6 and the Attitudes and Behaviors surveys to be administered to students in grades 7 to 9 would be incorporated into personalized learning plans and portfolios with appropriate services from the partners. Since all the districts within the consortium currently do not use the portfolios which will include extended learning opportunities for students such as the summer academies, the project would ensure all schools would implement the use of them.

It is unclear which districts do not currently participate in the portfolios therefore scaling up may only be a few schools and an unknown number of students.

The Center would administer the surveys and analyze the data that would be shared with the District Design Team to incorporate into students personalized learning plans, share information with parents, and coordinate the additional services the students would need since each district would have built a relationship with the stakeholders in the boundaries.

In efforts to build capacity and understanding of the importance of each student developmental assets among consortium district staff, the partners in the project would jointly provide professional development to its members. The applicant has also budgeted for school mental health liaisons to support the connection between service providers and schools being served.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

Throughout the proposal the applicant had several pieces that were basically yet to be determined since each district in the consortium must first create a District Design Team that would govern the development of the major components of implementing a personalized learning environment for its students. The applicant did however provide an abundance of research to support focusing on middle school students for the project since it is documented as the critical transitioning point for students. The applicant is highly successful in providing professional development to a districts in its region that support learning that included training on the state's adopted Common Core and College-and-Career standards which both must be met by students being served. There was not any baseline data for 2012-13 year but valid due to the change in teacher/principal evaluation systems going online in 2014-15 therefore there were not any projections of success implementation of the project but the applicant may have chosen to use 2011-12 data with the stipulation that data would change due to the new evaluation system to show that the project had the potential to be successful.

Total	210	82
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0093OH-2 for ESC of Cuyahoga County

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant has outlined a variety of professional development practices that they are planning to implement in order to support and restructure middle schools in the target districts.
- There is little evidence of work that they have done already in the four core educational assurance areas - no evidence is provided to demonstrate what has happened already and how this plan will enhance and build upon that work.
- The plan seems to center heavily on teacher professional development practices, with little specific information about how classrooms will change. The teacher professional development is designed to address personalization, modeling a process that will be reflected in schools and classrooms, but it is unclear if the applicant has a clear vision for what classroom instruction will look like under this new model.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
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(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant intends to focus on middle-grades students across the participating district. It appears they are defining middle grades as 4th-9th, depending on the district. There is no narrative to provide information about how the grade levels were chosen and why it is broken out differently across the consortium.
- Chart includes full listing of schools, number of students and number of students who are high-needs; as well as the number of educators in each school.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant has provided insufficient information about scale-up to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. They make one statement about their three-year cycle of design as crossing entire consortium and districts, but there is no specific information about how the applicant intends to scale this work beyond the pre-identified schools and middle grades.
- The existing theory of action supports the applicants outcome goals for the targeted schools and student levels.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- The data provided by the districts within the LEA for performance on summative assessments and decreasing achievement gaps is not sufficient to see that they have thoughtfully created a plan to meet these goals. Most districts report a growth in achievement and a decrease in achievement gap across all grades and all sub-groups, however, the plan does not address students outside of the middle-grades or any information on how the work with students outside of the grades 4-9 identified will be supported in reaching these targets.
- Several districts neglected to provide data and or provided inconsistent data across all forms. There is not sufficient evidence to determine if the applicants vision is likely to improve student learning; or how the districts involved are calculating these different performance measures. One district, Garfield Heights City School District, actually predicted a decline in student achievement with their SY2017-2018 data being listed as the same as their SY2011-2012 data.
- Each of the districts is predicting an increase in graduation rates, however, their plan only addresses middle grades, yet they are reporting all students rather than just the pre-identified cohort.
- Each of the districts is predicting an increase in college enrollment, however, their plan does not provide information on how this will happen.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	4

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant is an LEA made up of a number of districts. Bedford City Schools is in improvement process. They have worked to increase rigor, with some evidence of success including the district being rated as 'A' for value added on their state report card. Little evidence to support the claims that they have made significant improvements, particularly with their highest needs schools. Berea City School District met 24 out of 24 of the state indicators in 2012-2013, with their lowest performing schools making some progress on the performance index. Cuyahoga Heights did not provide any evidence of closing achievement gaps or how it is working the lowest performing schools. Garfield Heights School District had evidence of improvement across the district. The middle school, a traditionally low performing school, earned a 'B' on the state report card for closing achievement gap, and for the first time ever the district met the state goal for third grade reading - based on a three-year improvement process. . Maple Heights did not provide any evidence of improvement or work with persistently lowest-achieving schools. Warrensville Heights provided some evidence of improvement across the district and across grade levels including the following groups of students improving at least one year's growth: lowest 20% in grades 4-8; students with disabilities in grades 4-8 in reading, grade 4 reading increased 14.9%, third grade reading increased 12.2%.
- Each of the districts has some method for parents, students and educators to access student performance data.

- Districts did not provide evidence of how this data is used to improve participation, instruction and services.
- All districts mentioned several professional development practices that have been implemented to work towards student achievement, but did not have sufficient evidence to track how those changes were impacting student growth.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	3
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(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- All districts within the LEA provide actual personnel salaries for all staff as well as instructional staff at the school level. This information is available in monthly financial reports available on the district website, as well as by hard copy by request.
- LEA indicates that per-school expenditures are also available at the school level via website and hard copy by request. However, there is little evidence to support these claims and no details by district to support that this information is easily accessible.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10
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(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant provides information about how the current LEA plan is aligned with existing state-wide improvement processes including: following the Ohio Improvement Process; meeting the new AYP measures; providing state funding directly to schools/districts in order to provide services for low-performing students; some school reporting requirements have been reduced in order to provide greater flexibility for schools and districts.
- There appears to be a great deal of autonomy provided to the LEA and districts to utilize state and federal funding as well as reporting structures that are conducive to implementing a new teaching and learning plan.
- The LEA has also offered to support districts in seeking waivers if any conflicts arise. This up-front acknowledgement will provide districts with a wide variety of options to design programs to serve their students.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	3
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- There is little evidence that students, families, teachers and principals in participating schools were actively engaged in the development of this proposal. There is no evidence that they had an opportunity to review the proposal and make suggestions. The LEA alludes to a family engagement process that each of the districts is a part of, but no evidence that this specific project was used within this family engagement group.
- it is unclear if the participating districts have collective bargaining representation. There is no evidence that teachers from participating schools are in support of this proposal.
- Several letters of support from a variety of business, education and nonprofit organizations. No letters from student organizations or parents.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant has extensive research notes that are aligned with best practices for teaching and learning, and has thought through potential district set-ups to allow for conversations to take place. However, they do not have any specific evidence about how individual districts will change curriculum and instruction to better serve students.
- There is little evidence about how each district will specifically implement the various options. Several times during the application, the narrative states that District Design Teams will have the opportunity to craft individualized approaches to meet the needs of their own districts. There is no evidence that districts have begun this process, or that there is a conceptual framework for how each district will work to change teaching and learning to meet student needs. Applicant proposes that districts will undertake this critical analysis once the grant has been funded, however, this work should have started and there should be some evidence that districts have some theory of action

for how they are thinking about implementation.

- Applicant has provided a good theory based on research tied to personalization, however there is no specific plan for how districts will restructure their current systems to accommodate personalized learning environments. Application states that varied learning environments are encouraged, but no specific by district or even a consortium agreement about how these environments might be developed.
- Several examples of potential summer and after school strategies to support students, but no clear in-class strategies that will be present across the consortium.
- State of Ohio has developed some language about competency-based learning and extending learning opportunities, however, they are primarily available to high school students. The applicant cites several options for credit flexibility for both on-line and in-class opportunities, however, they are aimed solely at high school students. As this application is focused on middle grades (4-9) there is no evidence that districts are ready to create competency-based learning opportunities for this demographic or that they have thought about what that might look like.
- Throughout the narrative, the applicant provides evidence of potential partnerships and potential professional development opportunities for teachers. However, there is little evidence specifically tied to teaching and learning and how students and families will be able to access a more personalized learning environment.
- The narrative makes references to equity and achievement gap, however, there are no specific mechanisms to support individual students as they work to meet career and college readiness.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)

20

4

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The applicant is an LEA that has been primarily responsible for providing professional development support to districts. As such, they are well prepared to provide professional development as needed for districts. However, there is little indication that there is any understanding of what districts might need in order to fully implement this project. The application narrative points to District Design Teams that will do some needs assessment to determine what individual schools need. This lack of connection and lack of evidence make it unlikely that the project will be implemented in a timely fashion, or that the LEA is prepared to manage a project of this scale with so many independent variables.
- The applicant understands the need for specific professional learning supports and states that all districts will implement professional learning communities as one of the educator supports. There are no specifics about what strategies they would be providing professional development on, and very unclear linkages to professional development as it ties to providing personalized learning environments. The LEA is expecting that individual districts and schools will complete needs assessments prior to PD being designed.
- There is no evidence of specific professional development practices that will align with content and instruction adaptation. Implementing PLCs is a good structure for these conversations to happen, however, there is little evidence that individual schools and districts are well supported in doing the depth of learning that will be required.
- Applicant provides no evidence for processes and procedures by which teachers will measure progress towards standards. The narrative does include information about available data systems and previously created student learning objectives tied to the common core with some supporting curriculum tied to the standards. The tools may be available for this ongoing monitoring, however, it is unclear how schools and districts will provide structures and process to support this frequent monitoring.
- Applicant frequently references the Breaking Ranks in the Middle Grades framework designed by NASSP, but there is no evidence that the associated districts and schools have confirmed that this framework meets their needs, or that the curriculum and instruction within schools will change based on adoption of this framework.
- Narrative provides multiple research references for different professional development and instruction strategies, but there is no specificity about how schools will take this research and adapt it to their own teaching and learning. The applicant states that districts will be allowed to figure some of these specifics out once the grant has been funded, but that leaves no assurances that districts are capable of supporting this level of implementation.
- There is little evidence that districts have undergone any types of needs assessments to determine where gaps exist in order to more carefully consider how teaching and learning will change with the implementation of this project.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	2

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- There is little evidence/narrative about the LEA central office structure as it will be used to support all participating schools. The consortium has developed a decision-making process, but it is unclear how this process was developed and to what extent each participating district had the opportunity to co-design this structure.
- The narrative did not speak to the autonomy that schools will or will not have in terms of schedules, calendars, personnel, budgets or roles and responsibilities. There is no evidence that this conversation has taken place at an LEA level or at the district level.
- Applicant references the Ohio Credit Flex Plan as a model for allowing students to earn credit based on mastery. However, this is a high-school specific program. There is no evidence that the LEA or the consortium have discussed ways to implement competency-based learning at the middle grades level (4-9). Since the entire project is based on middle grades, this is a large lack of evidence and thoughtfulness in the project design.
- The narrative does not speak to, nor provide evidence, about how schools and districts will work to support all students including those with learning disabilities and English learners. There is no evidence that these high-risk groups have been discussed specifically or that programming is being designed with flexibility and an ability to adapt for individual students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)

10

1

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- There is no evidence that a thorough plan has been put in place to ensure that students, parents, educators and stakeholders have access to necessary learning resources. The narrative describes some technical support available at the LEA level, and alludes to technical support being available in the individual districts, however there is no specific evidence to support this claim.
- The narrative provides no evidence to demonstrate how they will support parents and students with technical support, or to what extent parents and students will be specifically utilizing technology as part of this implementation plan.
- The applicant states that all districts will have access to a new Instructional Improvement System that the State of Ohio is implementing, that should support interoperable data systems. However, there is no specific information about how districts will use this data, what data is made available, or how parents will access data.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	2

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- The LEA does not have a comprehensive plan for continuous improvement. Because they have not clearly defined what each district will do during implementation, they have no specific continuous improvement processes. They are committed to using the District Design Teams as a method for collecting and analyzing data, along with a national advisory board. The LEA plans to use an outside evaluator, but has not specifically developed a plan for what will be evaluated, how data will be collected, how it will be shared and how it will be used for ongoing improvements.
- LEA is planning to model their continuous improvement process after the NASSP Breaking Framework. The process is research-based and has six steps to design a process for improvement. However, there is still a lack of specificity about what will be measured and how. The LEA also mentions that they will use performance measures that are summative assessments. No mention of on-going formative assessments or data collection that can be used to make changes during the implementation process rather than at end-of-year points.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)

5

1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- The LEAs plan for continuous improvement does not include any information about ongoing communication and engagement with external stakeholders outside of the twice annual meeting of the advisory board.
- The consortium plans to meet monthly to provide update on plan development and progress measures, but there is no indication of how the LEA will provide ongoing communication and engagement with students, parents, teachers

and community members in each district.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)

5

1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

- From the narrative as written, it is difficult to discern what the actual performance measures are. It looks like the LEA has outlined a total of five performance measures: 1 & 2 have to do with effective and highly effective teachers and administrators; the number/percentage of students on track for college and career-readiness grades 4-8; number and percentage of students on-track to college and career readiness grade 9; career-readiness grade 9.
- There is no district-specific baseline data for any of these measures, however some Ohio State grade-level comparisons were included.
- There is no evidence of a plan to review this data or how it will be used to make changes and improve instruction.
- There are no academic performance measures indicated. Narrative includes a note that the consortium will align itself with Ohio's Race to the Top data system and will align their data collection with this new system.
- Because there is no baseline data, and very little projected data, there is no evidence that the LEA has a plan with ambitious, yet achievable, performance measures.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)

5

0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

- There was no narrative specifically address section (E)(4).
- Applicant has not included a high-quality plan to evaluate the effectiveness of activities. No narrative included that specifically describes the ways that the consortium will collect and evaluate the activities that they design.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	1

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

- Budget detail is insufficient to determine if it will support the project. The funding that will be allocated to the ESC as the coordinating LEA is described with some detail including a breakdown for coordinating the consortium; breakdown of costs associated with NASSP training; breakdown of costs for assessment of the project.
- There are elements included in the budget that were not discussed anywhere in the narrative including \$1.2 million for summer academy and OST; and almost \$400,000 for comprehensive systems of support including mental health supports. These were not mentioned as program activities in the narrative and do not seem that they are specifically aligned with the project as written.
- The districts are each getting a share of the funding based on a per/pupil calculation. There is no explanation of how these funds will be allocated and how the budget aligns with specific program designs.
- As written, this budget does not provide rationale for investments and does not clearly describe how funds will be used.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)

10

0

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

- Applicant has not included a high-quality plan for sustainability. They have indicated that they will convene a Sustainability Advisory Group that will be led by the Jennings Foundation. however, there is no indication that they are aware of how state and federal funding may be leveraged to continue the project, or what investments are one-time expenses vs. on-going expenses.
- There is no plan in place with thinking about how to sustain this project beyond the life of the grant.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	1
Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicants plan has identified research and potential partnerships including the Search Institutes Developmental Assets model, Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State; and Information from the CDC on six strategies for increasing school connectedness. However, there is little beyond the research to indicate how specifically these tools and resources will be implemented as part of a high-quality plan. The indicate that they will utilize a few different needs assessments - gathering of data - but there is no indication about how this data will be returned to districts and how it will be used to provide additional supports for students. There is very little evidence that parents are specifically targeted for engagement in a large-scale way. Parents will serve on the District Design Teams, but there is very little planning for thoughtfully engaging all parents and community members. The applicant has highlighted several strategies that the LEA can provide in general including bringing together the Family and Children First Council of Cuyahoga County. However, there is no specific plan for how these resources and partnerships will be utilized and developed to track specific indicators and then a plan to address how to serve students and families. 		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant has not provided a high-quality plan that will comprehensively address a change in learning for students. Most of the narrative includes theoretical and research-based best practices, with specific plans for how these tools and partnerships will be used to support students. Applicant has not provided any specific plans for the districts that make up the Consortium, and has indicated that needs assessments and plans will be developed after funding. This demonstrates a lack of thorough planning to significantly change teaching and learning and the creation of personalized environments for students. There is little evidence that the applicant has a high-quality plan that will accelerate student achievement; or that the applicant has a plan to utilize the personalized environment to decrease achievement gaps across student groups across districts. 		

Total	210	52
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Race to the Top - District
Technical Review Form
 Application #0093OH-4 for ESC of Cuyahoga County

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a general vision of innovation for middle grades students within the Educational Service Center (ESC). The strategy proposes to engage schools and the communities across the ESC region to develop personalized teaching and learning systems, introduces new technologies, pedagogy and content, and shared accountability systems and policies. The vision seeks to expand teacher's roles, develop their capacities as coaches, mentors, and learning facilitators.

The proposal commits to being "held accountable" to achieve the grant-required four core educational assurance areas by implementing a research-based model of two organizations, NASSP and AMLE.

The applicant references research but fails to define precisely how the big ideas presented will be implemented within regional school districts and in a large number of middle schools. It is difficult to assess exactly how many schools are involved in the proposed programs within the districts, and it is not clear if there are six or seven districts proposed as partners to this project.

The overall design does not make clear how the applicant will reach its constituency of educators and middle-grades youth and their families. A broad set of principles are stated pertaining to personalizing learning, improving educator collaboration, and building accountable, responsive evaluation systems. However, how the applicant plans to achieve this vision is ill-defined. Evidence about how the classroom experience will change for students and teachers was not provided.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)

10

3

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a clear narrative explaining its reform approach. It includes, instead, a list of participating schools, and the number of participating students, as defined by the NIA. Extensive charts of goals for student outcomes are provided but the data are presented without necessary information that explains what the charted numbers represent (e.g., whether they are raw numbers or percentages, the source of the data, and how the numbers were derived). Data are provided for grade levels that do not appear to be within the range of the application (e.g., high schools). It is also not clear how the applicant's focus on middle schools will translate to measures of career and college readiness. It is also not clear from these charts whether six or seven school districts will be involved in the implementation plan.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)

10

0

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

This criterion was not addressed.

The applicant provides charts of district-by-district goals without a description of the reform strategies to be used. It is unclear why goal statements are provided that appear to extend outside of the targeted grade levels (into both the lower and upper grades that surround the middle years).

No information is provided about the program plan, scale-up plans, or how the reform will be translated beyond the initial group of participating schools.

No logic model demonstrates the connections between the proposed innovation and its projected outcomes.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)

10

2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant does not provide a narrative to address this criterion. The evidence presented in the charts pertaining to the project's goals is not explained, making it very difficult to interpret the meaning of the charts, or to understand which assessments will track performance standards, decreasing achievement gaps, or how the applicant will measure graduation rates for a program that focuses on the middle years.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	6
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a narrative description of the various reforms participating districts have tried in the past. The evidence presented suggests that districts have undertaken many and varied initiatives with relatively little success. Neither the narrative nor the charts presented make clear how the various reform initiatives relate to specific goals achieved. Also, this section indicates there are SIX districts in this partnership, where other sections indicate there are SEVEN districts in the partnership.</p> <p>Part of the narrative itemizes districts' approaches but the summary makes it hard to see the commonality across districts and to understand the applicant's plans for offering cross-cutting solutions that promote continuity. Also, it is not entirely clear how available evidence about student achievement and participation is currently used by educators to improve participation, instruction, and services or how existing strategies will be changed by the proposed new system.</p> <p>The application would be clearer if outcomes-focused charts supplemented the narrative and demonstrated both longitudinal and comparative outcome achievements within and across districts.</p> <p>Finally, the framing of the accomplishments does not make clear which particular needs are shared across the districts and how those shared needs will benefit from cross-district and regional efforts.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant offers a statement stipulating to the fact that the districts within this proposed partnership have met the transparency requirements as defined in this criterion, but evidence is not presented. No sample website or link to the website that demonstrates the information. Without evidence, this criterion cannot be scored.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant claims that the SEA has increased flexibilities and freed schools from certain reporting requirements regarding certain professional development and other reform initiatives, however, substantive examples of these flexibilities and their implications for the program are limited.</p> <p>The applicant names four components of the State-sponsored innovations, including those that promote personalizing learning, teacher-based teams responsible for analyzing student progress and for differentiating instruction, new assessment practices, and attention to diversity in instruction, but it does not provide examples of how the State's policies and flexibilities might be used by districts or how the waiver flexibilities might benefit specific program components. .</p> <p>Also missing in this section is an explanation of how the State's reform context aligns with the project's proposed implementation of the RTTD's four core assurance areas. Additional information is needed to show how the context will support the local improvements of career and college ready standards integrated curriculum and assessments, updated and accountability-oriented educator evaluation systems, and responsive data systems.</p> <p>Details on these context elements, especially as they apply to middle-grades schools, would strengthen this component of the application.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	6
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The engagement by the stakeholder community in the development of this application is evidenced in the appendices through letters of support from numerous contributing partner organizations. Teacher union organizations have worked with each of the school districts' leadership teams and have contributed their signatures to the Memoranda of Agreements</p>		

that are included in this application.

The evidence provided in the letters of support and in the MOA indicates that the proposal development process involved stakeholder engagement throughout the proposal's development.

Lacking in the narrative, however, is description of how students and families were engaged in the development of the proposal or how the proposal was revised from participating districts' feedback. Also missing are details about the procedures and processes planned for the future to engage stakeholders and sustain their support during the life of the project.

Finally, the applicant refers in this section to "seven" partner districts, but, in other places in the application, it states that it will serve six partner district. While this might be a typographical error, there are several places with inconsistent statements about the districts to be served, and this type of confusion of information is unacceptable in a project of this magnitude.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5
(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Overall, this application is weakened by the absence of vital specifics about how the project will establish and monitor mechanisms for accomplishing the goals of this critical criterion.</p> <p>The applicant provides a broad-based literature review and descriptions of teaching innovations that have promoted improved teaching and learning within the partner districts. It describes its role as a coordinating organization, which will motivate, collaborate, facilitate and consult with regional teams and with partners and consultants. The applicant does not, however, provide a high-quality plan to accomplish these goals. Missing are critical specifics about the proposed program and structure that will improve learning and teaching, personalize the learning environment, and ensure college- and career-readiness among middle schoolers.</p> <p>This plan itemizes research-based strategies that inform the philosophy of consultation with partner districts, but it does not detail actions, timelines, and deliverables that will implement these strategies for all participating students.</p> <p>The applicant endorses improvements in districts that would enable participating students to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements, but it offers insufficient specifics. Time lines are missing; strategies to work in a coordinated manner are not defined; and how the organization will work across partner districts is not detailed.</p> <p>The applicant does not specify how re-trained teachers and educational leaders will ensure students a new level of access to personalized sequences of instructional content and skill development.</p> <p>Particularly problematic is that a specific plan and strategy for implementing new data systems within and across partner districts is absent. It is not clear how student learning will be monitored so that individual student data will determine progress toward mastery of grade-level and college and career ready standards.</p> <p>While the applicant endorses personalized learning through citations of initiatives in early phases within the partnership districts, and it references recent research-based strategies, no defined plan demonstrates how these practices will be implemented or on what time lines within each district. It is also not clear what specific new delivery systems and strategies will assess and implement appropriate accommodations for students with special learning, social, and emotional needs.</p> <p>Finally, although the applicant states that a "District Self-Assessment Guide" will be provided to district- and school-level leadership teams to monitor implementation, it provides no concrete examples or mock-up models.</p>		
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	5
(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>Overall, this application lacks actionable evidence of how the proposed projects will identify and implement optimal learning approaches to promote college- and career-ready teaching and learning. In brief, the applicant fails to specify the</p>		

details of training, policies, tools, data, or resources that will enable it to structure an effective learning environment that achieves the RTTD goals.

The applicant lays out a big-picture vision of how teaching and leading in its partner districts will be redefined. It indicates the intent to facilitate initiatives within districts to upgrade teaching quality so that teachers and educational leaders become skillful in establishing personalized learning environments.

Repeatedly, the applicant makes statements such as "ESC will coordinate, provide facilities and management, and collaborate with local, regional, and national partners." But it does not specifically explain what the plan is for accomplishing the project's goals or how the proposed projects will succeed in changing attitudes, capacity, and practice where other reform initiatives have failed. The applicant describes programmatic shifts that need to be made, and indicates that proposed changes are supported both by State policies and by research, but its design, strategy, and implementation plans are non-specific. Without such plans, it is not clear that the applicant will have the capacity to accomplish the requirements in this criterion.

The applicant indicates that Ohio's new teacher evaluation system was adopted in November 2011 and its Principal Evaluation System framework was adopted in 2009. Although these systems have been framed and pilot efforts have been initiated, the systems will not be fully implemented until 2014, so no evidence is yet available to gage how the program will work in the region of this project, what the challenges of implementation will be and, most importantly, no baselines or benchmarks or goals have been defined for professional improvement.

In one place in the proposal document, the applicant describes "a variety of methods and tools that support intentional learning for student improvement" which they call "21st Century approaches." Ironically, the list of proposed approaches cites long-existing research-based methods that characterized many of the reforms of the last half of the 20th Century. Missing here is evidence of HOW the applicant will take these proven 20th century research-based practices into the 21st century. It is not clear how the applicant will instill these valued approaches of teaching, motivating, collaborating, and learning structures into partner schools and classrooms using truly new strategies for achieving the project's stated goals of redirecting and modernizing teaching and leading in schools.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	3
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The approach emphasizes serving all schools through an LEA-based decision making structure, with the consortium acting as a "supportive" advisory service center. The applicant outlines systems that are currently in place regarding flexible credit accumulation and multiple mastery opportunities, and opportunities for students with special learning needs to access resources and varied instructional and learning strategies.</p> <p>While consensus building can be a fine planning strategy, it is not clear how the project leaders will ensure implementation fidelity to the proposed project. The stated approach is to give schools and districts "sufficient flexibility and autonomy" over program features that affect the proposed project's implementation goals, e.g., districts and schools will be able to determine staffing models, rules, and responsibilities, and school-level budgets. The applicant does not make clear what aspects of the project are non-negotiable, so it is hard to assess what practices, policies, and rules the participating districts will choose to accept.</p> <p>Finally, although this is a middle-grades project, the applicant does not specify how it will adapt procedures such as flex credit and alternate mastery approaches to young adolescents, and there is no strategy identified for how the project will serve learning disabled and EL students.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2
(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant addresses this criteria at the most general level, promising appropriate access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources, but the plan does not detail how in-and out-of-school programs will actually be implemented. The applicant reports that students will have access to the state's "Credit Flex" program; and it cites the</p>		

availability of community organizations that support multiple access avenues to tools and resources, but these references do not constitute a plan.

This listing of available resources and the promise that students and families will have access to interoperable data system fails to constitute a "high-quality" plan for how these resources will be organized, accessed, and evaluated, and how school districts' infrastructures will be enhanced to ensure that services are provided as stipulated in this criterion. A strong plan is needed that includes examples of activities, deliverables, time lines, and clear delineation of specific individuals, organizations, and systems that will be responsible for ensuring that LEA and school infrastructures are built to implement and sustain the proposed program.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	0
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant's statement fails to meet the requirements of a high-quality plan, e.g., it does not detail a specific plan that includes explicit means for measuring progress and outcomes. It fails to stipulate plans to provide timely and regular feedback on project achievements; it does not provide details of measures, analytic procedures or reports that will be available to monitor evidence of implementation. Without these data, it will be impossible for the project leaders to make continuous corrections and improvements that inevitably will be needed. A high-quality plan must provide specific performance measures and address how the applicant will establish, monitor, measure, and publicly share information on the quality of its investments, but these measures are not provided.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant states that the District Design Team is tasked with the responsibility of establishing goals and outcomes for the project, including a "customized plan" for communicating with stake holders. However, the applicant provides no guidance about how the process will happen, who will be involved, how communities and stakeholders will be continuously engaged, and what time lines and outcomes can be expected. The explanation provided entirely fails to address this criterion with the required specific and high-quality plan.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The evidence required for this criterion is incomplete, so it cannot be scored.</p> <p>The applicant states that Hanover Research will serve as a third-party researcher, and indicates the research team's intent to monitor and report quarterly updates on activity, but no specific plan describes what evidence will be collected, what measures will be used, how the data will be analyzed or reported, and how the project will report evidence of expected results.</p> <p>The applicant states that no information is yet available to set a baseline of expectations because the critical evaluation systems have not yet gone "on line." Failing to identify and complete the performance measures information leaves this application without a plan that can be assessed.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Although the applicant states that, in the future, it will "establish regular check points to monitor progress," it does not provide an evaluation design or plan; it fails to provide details about how project elements will be measured and how any measurements that are made will be analyzed and reported. No information demonstrates that applicant's awareness of</p>		

the "best thinking" about research and evaluation activities that make possible project adjustments and revisions. These are all necessary details that must be provided in the required high-quality plan that will rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the Race to the Top-funded activities.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides brief and skeletal project summaries, along with six tables with each sub-project's projected itemized costs. Brief narratives provide poor explanations of the projected cost components. The assumptions underlying projections are not clear. Annual budgets indicate a four-year project trajectory, although the proposal indicates this is a proposal to fund a three-year project. The overall budget for the total project also includes a four-year budget and Budget Subpart 2 does not include a narrative that explains how the budget elements are linked to the project components.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application anticipates convening a "Sustainability Advisory Group" that includes community representatives and stakeholders and it provides a projected budget. It states its intention to use the Search Institute's Developmental Assets model to sustain the program. However, the information about implementing the Search Institute's model is not aligned with a proposed program activities, timelines, strategies, or evaluation tools. It is unclear how the administration of the Assets surveys relates to the project's goals and performance expectations for sustaining grant-funded activities beyond the life of the project. In brief, the applicant does not address the requirement to provide a high-quality plan that will sustain the project after the grant period concludes.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	3
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>No performance measures are included as part of the "competitive preference priority" section, so this critical information cannot be evaluated. The applicant describes very generally how it anticipates its partnership will work to support its stated goals, but it does not detail how partners will convene, cooperate, or collaborate to accomplish specific goals, meet timelines, or produce deliverables that will achieve the project's objectives for middle-grades students.</p> <p>The applicant states that it will implement "two-layers" of a comprehensive system of support of the social and emotional needs of at-risk youth in the community. However, it does not address how the project offers a high-quality plan for ensuring these resources are put in place or for integrating existing and new sets of youth resources. Its intent to engage the Search Institute survey is one step in a process, not an entire, well-integrated set of services.</p> <p>The applicant fails to define clearly how the consortium partnership will work together to address critical privacy, collaboration, and cross-organization data sharing issues. No information details how the project will achieve its survey goals in communities and with families that are hard to reach. Beyond the stated intent to use the Search Institute survey, no information defines critical measures, data collection methods, analytical tools, or data integration and cycles of support.</p> <p>In brief, no evidence demonstrates a "coherent and sustainable partnership" that will support population-level desired results, partnership collaboration, and use of data to target improvement resources. The proposal is also especially weak on how the project supports special populations. While a list of potential services is offered, there is no explanation about how the partnership will connect these services to middle-school students and their families, and it is not at all clear if or how the projected project will build school staff capacity and the required and hoped-for tools and supports to upgrade the quality of assessment-based personalized learning for the region's middle graders.</p>		

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
<p>Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application fails to address the requirements of this Priority. The applicant advocates programs designed to support the development of personalized learning environments but it does not stipulate a coherent plan that comprehensively addresses how it will accomplish its goals. Particularly problematic is that a middle-school program is proposed but the applicant does not provide a focused and detailed plan that will change on-the-ground teaching for students or support systems for families for middle-grades students. Middle-grades improvements have been advocated for more than half a century, and there is solid and impressive research basis that demonstrates options. While the application's authors are clearly informed about practices and research in this field, the applicant has not created a set of credible plans, policies, programs, time lines, or strategies showing HOW it will achieve the ambitious goals it quite rightly advances.</p>		
Total	210	46