



Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0076MN-1 for Lynd Public School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3
<p>(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium described in the application for RRTD Grant funding (Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project) inadequately describes how they will build upon its work within the four core educational assurance areas. For example: They provide vague information regarding teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluation systems; however, merit-based pay or pay for performance will be supported with RTTD grant funds. The consortium does not adequately describe the college- and career-ready standards or how they will determine that their standards compare to the established college and career ready graduation requirements. The consortium plans to build a robust data system with the RTTD funds and acknowledges that there are insufficient protocols in place at this time to address this requirement. There is no mention of how the consortium will protect personal information and comply with FERPA regulations.</p> <p>The consortium is lacking details that support its approach of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. The consortium discusses professional development, differentiated instruction, and collaboration with Southwest Minnesota State University for the STEM offerings. While the concepts discussed are notable, they do not meet a "comprehensive and coherent reform vision".</p> <p>The consortium inadequately describes what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments.</p>		
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	8
<p>(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided a sound list of schools that will participate in grant activities and the total number of participating students, participating number of students from low-income families, participating students who are high-need students, and participating educators. The consortium was vague on the "process" used to ensure that the participating schools meet the competition's eligibility requirements. The applicant used low-income and high need students as a basis for membership in the consortium.</p>		
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4
<p>(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>While the consortium provided a logical model, it is limited in its robustness and its ability to be "scaled up" and translated into meaningful reform to support district wide change beyond the schools participating in the grant. The concepts and ideas presented are noted best-practices, but the application lacks the rigor that would constitute a high-quality plan. Example: The RTTD grant funds would support teacher incentive pay, the development of data systems, and hiring of staff, the plan does not give rationale as to how these initiatives will "improve student learning outcomes for all students served by the applicant".</p> <p>The applicant did not include a description of the plan to the extent in which it could be analyzed for this project.</p>		
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	5
<p>(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provided goals that are not considered ambitious. In the artifacts (charts) presented, the consortium does not address the achievement gaps. For example: The baseline for Lynd Math 3-8 = 63% for all students, with gaps</p>		

ranging 0-30 percentage points. The 2017-19 Goal for the same school and grade is 67% for all students, with gaps still ranging from 0-40 percentage points.

The overall performance status and growth varies. The consortium inadequately describes how they decided upon the achievement goals for the grant cycle and beyond. The goals are obscure and without this description of how they were determined, they seem inconsistent with the expectations of the RTTD grant.

There are data provided that addresses graduation rates and college enrollment rates.

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	5
<p>(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provides some evidence (charts and graphs) that shows the historical success of some of the participants in the consortium. They are missing historical data to support the overall requirement of a clear record of success in the past four years from Hendricks Public School District, St. James Public School District, and Wall School District. Lack of clear explanations leaves confusion to some of the artifacts included in this section. Without subgroup data, it can not be determined if there is a successful track record for closing student achievement gaps.</p> <p>The information provided by the applicant details the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Differentiated Instruction in all schools, but notes that they have no schools that are persistently lowest-achieving as defined.</p> <p>The applicant will use RTTD funds to build a data system that will allow performance data to be available to students, educators, and parents in ways that will inform and improve participation, instruction, and services. However, it is contradictory that "students are often involved" and not always involved in conferencing regarding performance and goal setting. Details regarding the system they will be using or a process to determine a system is unclear, making it hard to determine if it will meet the requirements of the RTTD grant.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>According to the applicant, the consortium complies with the laws within their state on transparency and accountability. However, the application is insufficient in describing the types of information that is assessable and how the information is made available. The applicants state "information is readily available" but does not explain how or where the information can be obtained.</p> <p>The applicant does not provide information regarding the extent to which the applicant already makes available the actual salaries at the state and local level, actual non-personnel expenditures as well as instructional and professional staff.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4
<p>(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>According to the applicant the state department of education has recently adopted a 7-point plan for moving education in Minnesota into the future. All aspects of the plan here align to the 7-point plan with the exception of incentive pay for teachers. The applicant does not discuss the applicants autonomy under current statutory laws if it has that authority.</p>		
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	6
<p>(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant assures that all stakeholders were included in the development of the proposal. The applicant's school leadership teams will meet monthly throughout the year and complete an annual needs assessment in order to revise the programming.</p> <p>The consortium all work with collective bargaining representation. There are signed letters of consent to the program submitted, however there is insufficient evidence in how they participated in the creation of the proposal.</p>		

The application does contain letters of support from local mayors. There are no other letters of support from such key stakeholders such as parents, parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, business community, civil rights organization, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The consortium provides a plan that will begin to focus students learning paths as early as Pre-K. "A greater focus will be placed on both careers and career paths" is confusing as it does not mention college paths. However, it is mentioned in other parts of the application.

The consortium will use self developed benchmark assessments (developed through RTTD funds) to monitor the success of students on their personal learning path. However, the consortium does not give ample details regarding these benchmark assessments other than a "consultant" will help them create them and they will be monitored quarterly. They do not give specifics as to the standards they are aligned to or if they meet the rigor of career and college readiness.

The consortium will develop new on-line coursework, but they do not address the students ability to access that coursework. The budget does contain equipment expenses, but those are for the teachers not the students.

The consortium supplies an assurance statement that the teachers have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives, but fail to explain how the students are offered the same access and exposure that will deepen the individual student learning.

The consortium states that it "has a strong track record" for supporting and developing student skills. The application states that more opportunities will be integrated into the personalized learning strategies through the RTTD grant, but lacks the details on how this will be accomplished or what it would look like.

The consortium provides details that support its vision of a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development designed to enable the student to achieve his or her individual learning foals and ensure he or she can graduate on time and college and career ready. The applicant inadequately describes how the students will be supported during the flexible, anytime, anywhere learning. The use of coaching in the classroom for teachers provides the support needed for teachers to be successful in the implementation of the project.

While the collaboration with Minnesota State University will offer some college level courses to those students who are enrolled in the two high schools, the plan does not discuss how a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments will be implemented in the other schools in their "cradle to career" plan.

The consortium provides a plan to provide ongoing and regular feedback, including frequently updating individual student data that will be used to determine progress toward mastery of college and career ready standards and graduation requirements. This will be done through the use of Personal Learning Plans (PLPs). The PLPs and the new data system will provide teachers with data to support recommendations based on the student's current knowledge and skills.

The plans accommodations and high-quality strategies for high-need students are lacking. According to the plan, one-on-one tutoring and additional assistance will be offered "when students are two or more grade levels behind". This is unrealistic and inconsistent with a high quality plan that address students who are in need of added support.

The consortium will provide training for students at the beginning of each year. The success of the training will be measured through surveys at the end of the year.

Overall the applicant does not provide a high-quality plan to implement the requirements under the teaching and learning section of the proposal.

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

The application provides assurance statements that all participating educators will engage in training that supports their individual and collective capacity to support the effective implementation of personalized learning environments and

strategies that will meet each student's academic needs through an "increased level of professional development, particularly as it relates to personalized learning environments, newly created data system, and new assessments and standards for all grades."

The application provides assurance statements that all participating educators will frequently measure student progress toward meeting college and career standards and the improvement of the individual and collective practice of educators, as the data "will be included in the new evaluation system based primarily on student achievement." The new data system (created through RTTD grant monies) will allow for the tracking of standards and benchmark assessments.

The application provides assurance statements that all participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward college and career standards and graduation requirements. The consortium will ensure this through providing professional development on both personalized learning and student data. New teachers will receive immediate training and will be assigned to a mentor teacher. The consortium will build on former work to assure that all resources are aligned to college and career standards.

The application provides assurance statements that all participating school leaders and leadership teams will have access to the teacher evaluation system that will provide feedback regarding the individual and collective needs of the participants.

The application provides assurance statements that a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including hard-to-staff schools and subjects through the use of RTTD grant monies to provide incentives for administration and teachers.

The consortium plans to use funds from RTTD monies to support incentives based on student achievement and evaluation outcomes. It is unclear how the project will be sustained after RTTD grant money is no longer available. It is unclear the consortium will ensure that those students who are the most in need are assigned to the highest qualified teachers.

While the applicant provides assurance statements that support each criteria of this section of the proposal, there is lacking evidence to support that this plan is a high-quality plan in which the goals, activities, and deliverables are aligned.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	6
(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium provides an organizing structure for the governance of the project that provides support and services to all participating schools. The narrative is inconsistent with the budget narrative. An example: The narrative in section (D)(1) states there will be a full time Project Director with 1 FTE; however, the budget has the Project Director at 25% FTE. There are several more discrepancies. Adequate details and information is needed to make a determination on the ability to support and service all participating schools.</p> <p>The consortium will seek board resolutions to ensure that autonomy is given to participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and school-level budgets.</p> <p>The consortium will use rubrics and skill development to demonstrate mastery of subjects or need for support. The application discusses "mastery of learning vs. seat time" but nonspecific as to how they will utilize this practice in the classrooms. The application is vague on specific strategies or concepts the consortium will use to build a rigorous and robust system that will work for all students including students with disabilities and language issues.</p> <p>While credit is given for policies and procedures that will be addressed in the future for implementation of the plan, the plan can not be considered complete as the discrepancies and lack of sufficient evidence to support the implementation of such "missing" pieces does not provide evidence that there is a high quality plan that includes goals, activities, and deliverables that are reasonable in implementing the plan.</p>		
(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	5

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application offers an assurance statement that all participating students, parents, educators, and stakeholders have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant's project; however, the application lacks details on how it will fulfill this commitment, especially addressing

those who are at an economic disadvantage and may not have the resources needed readily available.

The consortium will provide training to assist "all stakeholders" in the use of the new resources according to the application. According to the application, the consortium will rely on local organizations as a means of providing support. More information and examples of how they will do this are needed in order to understand what the outcomes will look like.

According to the application, the RTTD personnel will address this component once the money and position is secured. The consortium does assure that the parents will be able to access the data from whatever device or system they chose. These positions will also be charged with the creation of a data system that meets the requirements of (D)(2)(d) ensuring that an interoperable data system is in place.

The documentation found within the proposal does not constitute a high-quality plan and lacks the key goals, activities, and deliverables that are needed to ensure the projects ability to thrive and be successful.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6
<p>(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium provides a plan for implementing a continuous improvement process that provides feedback on the progress toward project goals and opportunities for ongoing corrections and improvements during the term of the grant.</p> <p>The application does not meet the rigor that is required to constitute a high-quality plan due to missing components such as more details on how the information gathered will be displayed and communicated with stakeholders as well as the transparency in the funding investments from the RTTD monies. The application fails to provide details on how it will ensure that stakeholders can see the return on the investment in professional development, technology, and staff in ways other than student achievement outcomes.</p>		
(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2
<p>(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides details that support a plan for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The leadership team will conduct quarterly meetings in which all groups within the consortium will be represented. However, this plan does not constitute a high-quality plan that with ambitious yet achievable goals, activities, and deliverables that are rigorous and go beyond the normal status quo.</p>		
(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3
<p>(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides a total of seven performance measures. Each has a rationale for selecting the measure. However, the plan is incomplete without a description of how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern or how it will improve the measure over time.</p> <p>For example: A performance measure selected was the number and percentage of participating students who complete and submit the FAFSA form. The rationale is that this measures initiative's impact on students' intention to pursue a postsecondary education. However, the plan needs to address how it will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its purpose and also a theory of action regarding why they chose this performance and measure and what impact the implimentation of the plan will have on this performance measure.</p>		
(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	1
<p>(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant has presented a plan for the evaluation of the effectiveness of RTTD funded activities by soliciting an external evaluator for data collection and analysis. The plan will evaluate the correlation between teacher characteristics</p>		

and student achievement, the impact the project has on student achievement, stakeholder attitudes towards the project, and variables that influenced the project. The application lacks the rigor needed to constitute a high-quality plan that will support the goals, activities, and deliverables that the project will be held responsible for.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The application provides a budget that includes both narratives and tables. The plan identifies all funds that will support the project including the federal and state funding that will also support the project.</p> <p>The budget discusses FTEs and project salaries. It is still confusing as the plan narrative calls for full time FTEs for Project Director, Secretary, etc., but the budgets has them as people already employed by the districts with partial FTEs. Therefore the budget is considered unreasonable and insufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal.</p> <p>The plan does provide a break down in one-time investments versus those ongoing operational costs that will be incurred during the grant period.</p> <p>The plan does not include thoughtful rationale for investments and priorities that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The applicant provides some details on the sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. The applicant shows how the consortium will utilize state and federal funds to continue the work of professional development for staff. The plan includes strategies that will be included to ensure sustainability over the course of the project by redeployment of current school funding sources to the fullest extent, reallocation of teacher incentive funds, reallocation of school revenues, seeking additional funding through tax initiatives, and seeking foundation or corporate support.</p> <p>The plan presented calls for added teacher and administrative incentives for student performance, it is unclear how these types of incentives will be supported after the RTTD grant money has ended?</p> <p>Overall, this plan is not considered a high-quality plan to ensure that the investments made align to key goals, activities, and deliverables expected by the leadership within the project. It is also not sustainable after the implementation of RTTD funds.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>The consortium will hire a community liaison who will work with all five districts to help align resources for families and students who are in need for added support.</p> <p>The consortium identified five areas that would be affected by the work of the partnerships built by the community liaison.</p> <p>The consortium's application lacks the details on how it will monitor and facilitate its ability to track the selected indicators, use that data to target the participating students, and develop strategies to scale the model beyond the participating students and participating districts.</p>		

The plan includes insufficient details on how the partnership would integrate education with other services such as social-emotional and behavioral needs.

The outcome or desired results are inconsistent with the plan that is presented in the competitive preference priority section of the application.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The consortium described in the application for RRTD Grant funding (Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project) inadequately describes how they will build upon its work within the four core educational assurance areas.</p> <p>The consortium provides vague information regarding teacher, principal and superintendent evaluation systems; however, merit-based pay or pay for performance is a major piece in the plan and will be supported with RTTD grant funds.</p> <p>The consortium does not adequately describe the college-and career-ready standards or how they will determine that their standards compare to the established college and career ready graduation requirements.</p> <p>The consortium plans to build a robust data system with the RTTD funds and acknowledges that there are insufficient protocols in place at this time to address this requirement.</p>		

Total	210	88
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0076MN-2 for Lynd Public School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project here after identified as SMRTT received medium points because it did not articulate an exemplary comprehensive and coherent vision responding to the four core educational assurance areas as defined in the Race to the Top District (RTTD) notice. SMRTT is a composed of four small rural Minnesota school districts and one South Dakota rural district. The largest district has 621 students preK-12 and the smallest has 116 students preK-8.</p>		

The SMRTT proposal indicated that the SMRTT districts and consortium had deficiencies in three of the four areas and would use RTTD funds to remedy those problems. The proposal indicated that SMRTT did not have any schools designated as "lowest achieving schools."

They gave adequate responses about what they wanted to do and how they would actually accomplish those goals associated with the three assurance areas that were applicable. The proposal indicated that SMRTT would focus on development of STEM standards and assessments to increase career options for their students. It did not provide information on how they would use existing standard and assessment work completed nationally and in their states or how they their work would meet state curriculum and assessment requirements. They did not address the process for how consensus would be achieved or how buy-in would be obtained for those standards and assessments.

(a) The proposal writers indicated that they did not have either individual or common data systems that measured student growth and success. They indicated that they would use RTTD funds to hire a consultant who would help them select and implement a system. The proposal did not make any mention of determining requirements, researching possible options nor did they provide information on how the five districts would make a selection.

The proposal addressed concerns associated with recruiting, developing, rewarding and retraining effective teachers more effectively in other sections than in the vision section. However even in those sections, the proposal writers seemed unaware of how very intensive the professional development requirements were to allow teachers to successfully implement personalized learning. The proposal did address additional compensation for teachers that had higher student achievement.

(b) The proposal, in other sections, articulated a clear and credible approach to the goals of accelerating student achievement, deepening student learning, and increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests. The proposal in other sections did talk about the facilitator role of teachers instead of presenter, the multiple learning scenarios taking place simultaneously, the real-time formative assessments resulting in individualize learning, the use of digital tools, etc.

(c) The proposal, in other sections, did describe sufficiently well what the classroom experience will be like for students and teachers participating in personalized learning environments. In describing a personalized learning classroom, there was no description about how students would be more responsible for their learning, the teacher as facilitator, the heavier uses of technology to provide individual learning opportunities and other changes in the classroom as a result of implementing personalized learning.

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

10

6

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

SMRTT received medium points because:

(a) The proposal provided an adequate but not exemplary description of how schools were selected for inclusion in the proposal. The explanation given was that those particular five districts had worked together as part of a larger group. They also stated that they "considered issues related to low-income and high need students as a basis of our consortium membership." There was minimal discussion about teacher, student and parental involvement in the selection and design of the proposal. The planning and design appeared to be primarily the work of administrators.

(b) The names and populations of the districts was provided. SMRTT is composed of four small rural Minnesota school districts and one South Dakota rural district. The largest district has 621 students preK-12 and the smallest has 116 students preK-8. The districts are Lynd, Hendricks, Russell-Tyler-Ruthon, Sleepy Eye and St. James in Minnesota and Wall in South Dakota.

(c) The proposal noted that 2002 students would be served thus meeting the 2000 student threshold. It also stated that 48.38 percent of the students are low-income and 46.92% are high need and thus meeting the 40% RTTD requirement.

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

10

4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The SMRTT proposal had almost no discussion of how successful work would be scaled up to non-participating districts. This may be because all students in the five districts were included in the proposal. They did indicate that they would share their successes with the promising practices on the State Web site.

The logic model was rich on the what and when of their work. It provided information on inputs, activities, outputs, short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes. However, the model was limited in its description of the how their plan would be implemented and how the plan would result in improved student learning.

It also did not provide a clear picture of what those improvements would look like for individual students. It did not provide a picture for how the program would improve student learning outcomes for all students who would be served. Because of lack of specifics for scale-up and especially the improved learning outcomes for all students, the LEA-wide and reform and change section earned medium points.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2
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(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In other sections, the SMRTT proposal had information on how the RTTD effort would result in improved student learning and performance. The proposed goals for improvement were very minimal with most improvement targets limited to 1 percent increase each year. Similar minimal goals were established for decreasing achievement gaps. SMRTT schools had higher graduation levels than national averages but those higher levels showed large disparities with 91% graduation rates for White students and 62% for Hispanic students. Goals showed only 1 or 2% increases in graduation rates per year for Hispanic students. Low points were awarded to this section because the proposal had little description of how the extra RTTD funding would improve student learning and performance and increase equity. This section earned low points because the goals for improvement were so very low mostly 1 to 2% increase each year.

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	3
(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>This section earned low points for the following reasons.</p> <p>(a) Analysis of data revealed that combined student learning outcomes across the five districts were fairly flat and that there were minimal success in closing the achievement gaps including by raising student achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates;</p> <p>(b) The proposal indicated that none of the five districts had schools identified as lowest-achieving or low-performing schools. The proposal did provide information about how Professional Learning Communities in each district were working to improve achievement.</p> <p>(c) The proposal provided information on how student performance data was made available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve student participation, instruction and services through teacher conferences and paper reports such as report cards. The proposal did not allude to digital on-going assessments that would inform teaching and learning but did allude to use of data boards and wall charts.</p>		
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2
(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>SMRTT was awarded medium points for increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments. All districts met state minimum requirements associated with the transparency requirements that included the RTTD expectations specified in requirements (a), (b), (c) and (d) in their reports to local boards..</p> <p>The proposal made no mention of present efforts to address other populations such as parents, students, community members through use of Web sites, special community meetings or documents.designed for parent or community use. In later sections, SMRTT indicated that it would offer those options in the future.</p>		
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	8

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Points were awarded because the proposal stated that the Minnesota Department of Education, Legislature and Governor provided all districts successful conditions and sufficient autonomy under state legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in the applicant’s proposal. High points were awarded because the according to the proposal the "personalized learning environments are aligned with the Minnesota Department of Education’s plan to improve instruction. A recently released report, *Blueprints: Redesigning Minnesota High Schools for the 21st Century*, highlighted personalized learning as an instructional strategy to improve student outcomes. Training on this issue is also available through the state Department of Education. In addition, the project is aligned with the 7-Point Plan for Excellence in Education. The proposal indicated that in February 2011, Governor Dayton developed this framework as a long-term vision for Pre K–12 education in Minnesota over the coming years."

There appeared to be no areas where the plan proposed in the proposal would be hampered by the State regulations or requirements. Maximum points were not awarded because the proposal did not indicate which specific proposed personal learning opportunities would profit from the autonomous conditions in Minnesota.

The proposal did not address the South Dakota conditions and their impact on the Wall district.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)

15

3

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The SMRTT proposal was awarded low points for stakeholder engagement and support for the reasons noted below.

There was no evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the proposal and meaningful stakeholder support for the proposal. The proposal seemed to be a product of a few district administrators. Specifically there was:

- No description of how students, families, teachers, and principals in participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal and, as appropriate, how the proposal was revised based on their engagement and feedback.
- Other than a signature, there was no evidence of enthusiasm from the collective bargaining representation, evidence of direct engagement and support for the proposals from teachers in participating schools. There were no letters on which to judge commitment and enthusiasm from this key group.
- Except for a few mayors, there were no letters of support from other key stakeholders such as parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, tribes, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, and institutions of higher education.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	9

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The following are the summaries of the positives in the proposal:

(a) With the support of parents and educators, all students—

(i) Understand that what they are learning is key to their success in accomplishing their goals.

- Greater focus will be placed on both careers and career paths
- Personal learning paths reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis.
- Careers and corresponding educational needs will be discussed and integrated curriculum.

Weakness was that the response was overly general and the proposal did not indicate how students would be given information on the key skills of each career choice.

(ii) Identify and pursue learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards or college and career-ready graduation requirements, understand how to structure their learning to achieve their goals, and measure progress toward those goals.

- Benchmarks as well as steps to obtain goals are prepared

- Benchmark assessments will reviewed quarterly and discussed with both students and parents

Weakness was that assessments were not seen as continuous decisions to identify and remediate needs as they were identified but instead treated as benchmarks on a time interval

(iii) Are able to be involved in deep learning experiences in areas of academic interest.

- On-line coursework coupled with real-life experiences provide students the opportunity to explore academic interests.
- Higher education partners will also support additional resources for students in terms of accessing academic opportunities, particularly in STEM areas.

(iv) Have access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning.

- All academic offerings are provided in a culturally appropriate context
- Professional development will focus on diverse cultures and perspectives to encourage further integration into classrooms.

Weakness the answers were overly vague and nonspecific. They had no clear path for remediation of cultural isolation.

(v) Master critical academic content and develop skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.

- Interpersonal skills have been supported by teacher professional development opportunities
- Work has been done to support the integration of critical skills into current curriculum.
- Current students are engaged in activities to strengthen these vital skills

(b) With the support of parents and educators, there is a strategy to ensure that each student has access to:

i. a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development

Weakness The proposal emphasized time benchmarks instead of **a personalized sequence of instructional content and skill development**. The following are two examples:

- all students will participate in twice annual meetings with their parents and classroom teachers, assessing student progress against state and national standards and determining short-, mid-, and long-term goals leading to student graduation.
- Data for individual students will be reviewed quarterly to determine individual student's needs.
- Weakness was that assessments were not seen as continuous decisions to identify and remediate needs as they were identified but instead treated as benchmarks on a time interval.

On a more positive note, the Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project personalized learning model would be based on *Make it Personal: Transforming Connecticut's Education System* that the proposal indicated was structured on a personalized learning format.

(ii) A variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments.

Positives

- Personal learning will hinge on a variety of instructional approaches including, but not limited to, classroom learning, on-line learning, real world experiences, training and certification opportunities, and other approaches and environments as needed.
- Cradle to career approach included many local and regional partners that will provide students with unique learning opportunities.

ii. High-quality content, including digital learning content as appropriate, aligned with college- and career- ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

- Digital learning content relating to college-level courses. Much specifically related to STEM, but also other learning opportunities.
- Southwest Minnesota State University will provide college-level Psychology and Sociology courses for high school students attending RTR High School

SMRTT earned medium points for this section. The strengths and negatives were noted above. Proposal writers appeared to have general understanding of the administrative tasks that needed to be done if the SMRTT program was to be successful. The plan appeared to use existing resources such as exemplary programs in some schools and linkages to higher education to help implement components of the proposed work.

The most significant weakness across the plan was that the time frame for the completion of tasks was unrealistic in the time frames proposed. In many cases, very complex tasks such as selecting curriculum, developing instructional strategies, providing necessary professional development, linking appropriate assessments and analyzing weakness, strengths and remediation were solved by hiring an outside consultant. In some cases such as development of personal learning curriculum and assessments, SMRTT believed they could complete this work in a few months when organizations with far more resources required years to complete similar work. There appeared to be little thought given to involvement, building consensus and buy-in from teachers, students and parents in those decisions that would be imposed on them.

The proposal also suffered from having insufficient specifics for how individual needs of very different students from gifted to high need would be met and how those individual plans assured improved learning and teaching to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready. The proposed plan also suffered from limiting parental participation mostly to twice a year meetings instead of developing a design that would provide on-going feedback and participation. Points were deducted because while the implementation plan had related tasks, deliverables, timelines and person responsible it did not provide rationale for why the key goals were selected.

(c) The proposal gained points because it did provide information on how they would provide training and support to students that will ensure they understand how to use tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. The proposal indicated that training would be provided each student at the start of each semester as appropriate for each. The evaluation plan noted that surveys would be conducted to assess how competent each student felt in accomplishing that task and that information would inform what adjustments needed to make training more effective.

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

20

14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading

This section earned medium points for the following reasons. The proposal had numerous specific positives and those are noted below. The weaknesses were more general and were true across almost all of the teaching and leading section.

As noted in (C)(1), this section suffered from unrealistic expectations of how fast administrators, teachers and students will be able to accomplish tasks associated with a successful RTTD personalized learning program. The proposal suggested that many teachers and administrators had minimal backgrounds and experiences in implementing personalized learning environment that would ensure that all students graduate college- and career-ready. Most teaches have not adapted content and instruction, provided opportunities for students to engage in common and individual tasks, in response to their assessed needs.

The proposal writers seemed limited in their knowledge of research literature associated with personalized learning. The proposal made limited mention of how exemplary programs would be examined and adapted for their use. The plan design and strategies for preparing teachers to make all those changes in the time periods proposed suggest serious possibilities of limited success across all the districts with their unique needs and problems.

The proposal also did not provide evidence that teachers have bought in to this very different way of teaching. The proposal needed evidence that teachers are excited and supportive of this dramatic change in how they provide instruction. The fact that there was no evidence of major teacher participation in the development of the proposal and the lack of any enthusiastic letters of support

(a) Points were awarded because all participating educators engage in training, and in professional teams or communities, that supports their individual and collective capacity.

- Each teacher develops annual student growth objectives in consultation with his/her principal, the achievement of which leads to bonuses and salary increases.
- SMRTT will implement professional development opportunities to support the determination and achievement of annual objectives tied to student achievement and the selection of appropriate assessments for measuring student progress.
- Data from benchmarked assessments, MCA, and Iowa Skills test will be used to determine successful completion of student achievement goals, which will impact evaluation and disbursement of bonuses.
- Progress monitoring will occur three times each year using NWEA to provide frequent and individualized feedback to all teachers.

(b) Points were awarded because All participating educators have access to, and know how to use, tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements.

Educators will be provided professional development on how to identify optimal learning approaches that respond to individual student academic needs and interests.

- All teachers will have access to both professional development related to personalized learning and student data.
- New teachers recruited to the consortium will immediately receive training on all available tools and resources.
- Training and support will be adjusted based on feedback to optimize instruction.
- Mentor teachers will support continuous improvement of all teachers in our consortium schools.

(ii) High-quality learning resources (e.g., instructional content and assessments), including digital resources, as appropriate, are aligned with college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements, and the tools to create and share new resources.

- All developed tools and resources will align with college- and career- ready standards.
- The consortium has begun gap analysis of course content and resources, and is prepared to align all newly created to standards.
- Partners' offerings are already aligned and will further support a high quality personalized learning environment.

(iii) Processes and tools to match student needs with specific resources and approaches to provide continuously improving feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting student needs.

- Personalized learning plan developed for each student will be supported by data from assessments and benchmarking, movement towards goals, and classroom achievement.
- Continuous student data will provide teachers with information to determine any changes to goals or needed additional resources.

(iv) Points were awarded because because implementation of the proposal would improve teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness by using feedback provided by the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation systems (as defined in this notice), including frequent feedback on individual and collective effectiveness, as well as by providing recommendations, supports, and interventions as needed for improvement.

The proposal was specific about how *the LEA's teacher and principal evaluation systems would inform financial investments.*

- The proposed teacher and principal evaluation system was based largely on student achievement
- Achievement would be determined by benchmarked assessments, MCA, and Iowa Skills test.
- Goals would be revised annually or more frequently as needed.
- Progress monitoring will occur three times each year.
- NWEA would provide frequent and individualized feedback to all teachers.

Points were deducted because the proposal was less specific about how this feedback would inform supports and interventions that would directly impact increase student achievement.

(c) (d) (e) There was insufficient information to make judgments about positives or negatives

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	10

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(D)(1)

This section earned medium points. The positives were that the applicant had practices, policies, and rules that facilitated personalized learning through extensive freedom to make building and district decisions. The proposal indicated that the Lynd Superintendent would have overall supervision but that s multi-disciplinary advisory council comprised of all LEA superintendents, building principals and parent representation would oversee project implementation and management. The plan suggests that the effort will be more concerned with sharing RTTD funded resources than implementing a program across districts.

The project would add part-time and full-time staff including a project director, secretary, technology coordinator and a professional development specialist that would provide support to all participating districts. The design of the project would give school leadership teams in participating

schools sufficient flexibility and autonomy to implement desired programs. They would have control of school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities for educators and noneducators, and school-level budgets. The proposal noted that each district responding to its own needs and community priorities would be free to decide its programs and priorities.

The obvious problem with this design is that the RTTD program has goals and expectations that all districts must accomplish. The districts have autonomy to determine and manage their program. The proposal does not address how accountability will be addressed for meeting those commitments if individual districts fail to accomplish the tasks they have agreed to mutually complete. For instance, how would the Advisory Council address failure by one or more districts to implement required teacher-evaluation components based in part on student test scores. Or worse, what if a district spent money on activities outside the scope of RTTD approved work.

The proposal indicated that student progress will be based "on their mastery of a topic ("Mastery Learning") through which students will have opportunities to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, rather the amount of time spent on a topic ('seat time'). This approach will enable all participating students to achieve the same level of content mastery based on achievement and understanding—regardless of the amount of time spent studying the subject. In addition, each of the five participating districts will offer high school students opportunities to participate in dual-credit and vocational and career classes.

There was insufficient discussion of all of the elements of a high-quality plan (a plan that includes key goals, activities to be undertaken and the rationale for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities). Often the the deliverables, and the parties responsible id not have sufficient detail,

The following are components in the proposal that warrant a medium score for this section.

(a) Organizing the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure, to provide support and services to all participating schools.

- Lead applicant, Lynd Public School District, and its Superintendent Bruce Houck will manage the consortium.
- Each school district has pledged the support of its curriculum development resources, central office staff and other resources as needed to ensure success. The project will hire a full-time Project Director to oversee all project-related activities, and facilitate communication with the administrative structures at each participating district
- Additional project staff will be hired to support each individual school and district and the consortium as a whole.
- Project Director will provide overall project leadership, work with leadership of each district and partnering group or institution, to develop a master set of achievable project goals.

(b) Providing school leadership teams in participating schools with sufficient flexibility and autonomy over factors such as school schedules and calendars, school personnel decisions and staffing models, roles and responsibilities

- Project is envisioned to be both district and school specific. Each district serves a different community and has different issues to address, thus the need for flexibility and autonomy is crucial to success.
- School-based Leadership Teams in all schools will be empowered with the autonomy to make decisions regarding the school schedule, the recruitment and hiring of new personnel as well as determining how these will best fit into the organizational structure, delineating the roles and responsibilities for teachers and support staff, and making spending decisions at the school level in line with each school's demonstrated needs. As appropriate, new policies, created by district administrators and approved by the Boards of Education, will ensure that School-based Leadership Teams are granted this autonomy.
- Each team will actively manage the reform efforts at each school and provide supports to teachers and staff to ensure that student achievement goals are reached.
- The teams include the building principal, the assistant principal, a lead teacher, and persons representing each grade level, parents, and counselors.

(c) Giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time

Spent on a topic.

- Participating districts will offer high school students opportunities to participate in dual-credit and vocational and career classes.
- Participating districts will also offer their students opportunity progress based on their mastery of a topic ("Mastery Learning") through which students will have opportunities to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, rather the amount of time spent on a topic ('seat time').

(d) Giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multiple comparable ways.

- Rubrics and skill development will be used to demonstrate our students’ mastery of standards. Opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards will be made available to
- students throughout the school year’

(e) Providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students, including students with disabilities and English learners.

- All resources and practices are designed for use in personal learning environments.
- Resources and practices are adaptable and accessible to all students including those with disabilities and English learners.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6
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(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The SMRTT proposal earned medium points for this section. The proposal writers agree to meet the RTTD expectations and they provide examples of promising options to accomplish those expectations. The proposal was not sufficiently detailed on the deliverables and who would be responsible. There was insufficient discussion of how the South Dakota specific expectations and reports for Wall would be managed. The proposal was written almost entirely from a Minnesota perspective. See below for quality ideas to accomplish RTTD expectations.

The following are positives targeted at LEA and school infrastructure

(a) Ensuring that all participating students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders regardless of income, have access to necessary content, tools, and other learning resources both in and out of school to support the implementation of the applicant’s proposal.

- All tools and resources will be made available to all key stakeholders, including students, parents, educators and others.
- Data regarding individual students will be analyzed and made available to parents and students on a regular basis.
- All resources are available online, thus we will ensure accessibility via district computer labs and meetings with school staff.
- All districts are committed to providing all students, parents, educators and other stakeholders with opportunities to succeed.
- Parents will have anytime, anywhere access to a variety of resources through the development of a **Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project** website that will contain program information, content, learning tools and other information to support parents.

(b) Ensuring that students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support, which may be provided through a range of strategies

- Project and district staff will all be trained on new resources and tools to assist all stakeholders with accessing appropriate information
- Project staff will be available to provide technical support in-person, on-line, and via the telephone.

(c) Using information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open dataformat (as defined in this notice) and to use the data in other electronic learning systems

- The hired technology staff person will determine means for parents to easily export appropriate technology data.
- Contact information will be provided so that all key stakeholders can easily access desired information.

(d) Ensuring that LEAs and schools use interoperable data systems that include human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data).

- Minnesota Rural RTT Project will ensure all systems currently in place in each district will be compatible and link together needed data.
- All schools will be measuring the skills of each individual student needed to be successful in future education and career paths

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	10

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The SMRTT proposal earned medium points for this section. The evaluation plan responded to key data sources and components inherent in a project of this size. The plan addressed both cognitive and affective outcomes addressing both achievement and attitudes in determining success. The plan paid attention to other factors than test scores. They intended to use interviews and surveys to obtain opinion of which efforts were most successful and what activities needed to be modified. They will consider other factors such as school attendance, decreased disciplinary incidents in the first few months of the school year, decreased dropout rates, decreases in teacher mobility, low staff morale, and increased effectiveness ratings on performance evaluations. The proposal provided numerous ways the information will be used to make improvements and acknowledge successes. In the next section, the proposal did provide information about how findings would be shared beyond use of reports and community meetings. As noted earlier, the implementation plan suffered from insufficient rationale as to why particular goals were selected.

The most serious problem was that the proposal itself lacked sufficient "personalized learning" content so that the evaluation could anchor to in a meaningful way. The evaluation plan had a quality design but it did not have sufficient program content to make a case that it would be evaluating "personalized learning" as required by the RTTD notice. Another serious negative was the very high cost of evaluation and data collection efforts. Those costs were approximately twenty percent of the total budget. The applicant did not justify why such a large evaluation budget was needed.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

This section earned medium points. The plan described several ways that the project will publicly share information about successes and concerns. They have promised to utilize newsletters, websites, school board and governance meetings, annual reports and in other forums on a regular basis. Some positive specific tasks envisioned included

- The school board and leadership staff meet annually with representatives from teacher organizations and all vendors to refine contracts and renew memorandums of understanding.
- The leadership team will hold quarterly meetings in which the superintendents association, principal groups, teachers unions, elected officials, parent organizations, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders are invited to provide feedback and advise on issues related to the project implementation.
- Communication and outreach will be guided by a multi-year communication plan and will be included in our evaluation process. The communication plan will be revised based on input from stakeholder feedback, advisory groups, and performance management information.

Points were deducted because the applicant did not have a clear and high-quality approach to continuously improve its plans and because it had insufficient information about the rationale used to select goals and activities.

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal earned middle points on performance measures. The proposal provided only 7 measures instead of the 12 to 14 requested. The seven measures did provide ambitious yet achievable performance measures, overall and by subgroup with annual targets for required and applicant-proposed performance measures. The proposal did provide information on how they would review and improve the measures over time if they proved insufficient to judge implementation progress. The proposal was less detailed in its rationale for selecting the measures and how the measures would provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan. The theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern was not specific. The plan also did not provide sufficient rationale for selection of goals and activities.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The evaluation plan earned medium points. The design uses an external evaluator thus providing external validity. The plan had excellent key evaluation questions and the questions were linked to appropriate performance measures. It utilized a variety of data tools that addressed numerous considerations. It was concerned with numerous players in this effort including students, teachers, administrators and parents. It addressed numerous

components of success and concerns. The plan gave considerable attention to professional development and activities that employ technology and gave serious concern to all the key components of the proposal.

As a positive, the plan included key goals, activities to be undertaken for the activities, the timeline, the deliverables, and the parties responsible for implementing the activities. The plan did not provide rationale for the choices made in goals and activities.

The most severe problem was that while the proposal had an evaluation plan that had a strong design, the proposal was so lacking in "personalized learning" content that the evaluation plan was unable to make direct linkages to the actual personalized learning findings.

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>This section earned low points because the budget detail was insufficient to make judgments about reasonable and sufficient expenditures. Most budgets only provided category totals and thus did not have task breakouts. This was true of both the total and yearly budgets. There were some totals for state and local contributions but those seemed incomplete. The budget did provide information on one time costs.</p> <p>The categorical budgets were problematic as some key staff seemed to be funded as part-time employees. Professional development appeared greatly underfunded especially for summer work that will be necessary if this project is to be successful. Even more problematic, there was insufficient linkage between activities and their budget expenditures.</p> <p>A troubling factor was that 20 percent of the total funds were budgeted to be spent on evaluation and data gathering without providing why such a large evaluation-related expenditures were necessary. Most problematic was that the expenditures for development of assessment items given the extensive work already being completed with state and federal funding. The proposal did not provide justification for reinventing the assessment wheel but perhaps more budget detail would have better justified the requested funding.</p> <p>On a positive note, the budgets did identify which funds would be used for one-time investments versus those that will be used for ongoing operational costs that will incurred during and after the grant period and they did have a focus on strategies that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
<p>(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>This section earned medium points. This section had very sparse information and thus judgments were very difficult to make about sustainability.. The proposal noted that the plan for sustainability was to reduce or end certain expenditures that had already been addressed with RTTD funds and then make reallocations from existing local resources for those activities that would be continued. General tasks and budget categories for reallocation were identified. Reallocation appeared to address those activities most essential for continuation of the key components. Points were reduced because an estimated budget for continued activities was not provided. As in other sections, the plan suffered from insufficient information about the rationale for the decisions. The plan did not have sufficient timelines and responsible parties. This was especially important because decision making, responsibility and accountability were so individual district oriented.</p>		

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4
<p>Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:</p> <p>Medium points were given because the proposed work was important and the proposed outcomes would likely have numerous successes. High points were not given because the proposal was not innovative and likely not a model that would have impact beyond the targeted districts. The proposal did not provide a description of a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students to at least other high-need students and communities in the LEA or consortium over time. The biggest problem with this Competitive Preference proposal was that partners were not specifically identified and there appeared to have been few partnership agreements concluded</p>		

The following are some of the significant factors for each subsection:

(1) Provide a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership that it has formed with public or private organizations, such as public health, before-school, after-school, and social service providers; integrated student service providers; businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and postsecondary institutions to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.

SMRTT had as its competitive preference establishment of a community liaison that would serve the five districts. The tasks that the community liaison would undertake were similar to those associated with community liaisons in larger school districts. The major tasks were to improve communications between home and school and to connect student and family needs with possible resources.

The response about partnerships was inadequate as it did not provide a description of the coherent and sustainable partnership that it has formed with public or private organizations but instead responded in general terms about possible links. Even then the partnership was more about locations the community liaison could send students and parents than truly contributing partners.

(2) Identify not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA or consortium of LEAs that align with and support the applicant's broader Race to the Top – District proposal. These results must include both educational results and other education outcomes (e.g., children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school, children exit third grade reading at grade level, and students graduate from high school college- and career-ready) and family and community supports (as defined in this notice) results.

As a positive, the work of the consortium will align with and support the personalized learning outcomes of this grant include the following:

- • Increased academic achievement
- Improved school attendance (Decrease in chronic absenteeism rates - absent 10.0% to 19.9% of all possible school days)
- • Decrease in disciplinary actions and severity of actions (Suspension and expulsion data)
- • Graduate from high school
- • Stronger links between students, families, and the schools (Monthly data reports from School Counselors)

(3) Describe the partnership–

The description of the partnership was very minimal primarily because very little information was provided about who the partners would be and what would be their specific contributions. There seemed to be no signed partnership agreements and in fact there seemed to have been very little upfront work to create the partnerships.

- Aggregate data for achievement, attendance, suspensions and expulsions will be tracked at the individual school building level.
- The School Counselor as well as annual teacher and parent surveys will track stronger links between community, students, families and schools at the school building level.

(4) Points were added for how the partnership would, within participating schools, integrate education and other services.

- Partnership will impact target schools by engaging local organizations currently offering high-level culturally appropriate services and developing to partner with both the schools and individual families to provide services for students.
- Services will focus on academic achievement, but will engage other services and resources as needed by the individual students and families.

(5) Points were deducted for the explanation of how the partnership and LEA or consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and supports.

There was little attention given to how consortium would build the capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with tools and support. Instead the description focused on process issues noted below:

- Students and families are referred from school principals, teachers, nurses, support staff and school social workers and counselors to the Community Liaison in order to access needed services and supports.
- Students are frequently identified based on absenteeism or behavioral issues
- The partnerships developed with area community organizations and businesses over the past two years have been instrumental in providing additional multigenerational learning activities that engage both students and their parents at the school site.

(6) Points were deducted for the proposal's annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students.

The proposal had very detailed and quality performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for students. It noted the target populations for each, and the base and four year projections for success. It had one community, one parent, one school personnel, one social service, one social service outcome, and five student measures. The topics ranged from increased access to academic resources to schools

are engaged with the community. This subsection was the strongest part of the “Competitive Preference Priority” proposal

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met
Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant did not coherently and comprehensively address how it would accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; increase the effectiveness of educators; expand student access to the most effective educators; decrease achievement gaps across student groups; and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers. The proposal suffered from insufficient upfront preparation before writing the proposal. At times, the proposal writers seemed unfamiliar with the research literature on what efforts would enhance successful personal learning.</p> <p>The proposal did not provide support for how it would determine and implement its “Personalized Learning” vision and goals in the four years of the RTTD program. The consortium has minimal prior record of success and in fact little evidence was provided of significant common planning. Decisions on many of the infrastructure preliminaries such as requirements should have been made before writing the proposal.</p> <p>The budget had problems in specifications of detail but also priorities. More funds were allocated for evaluation related tasks than for crucial teacher professional development. The “Competitive Preference Priority” had serious problems because partners were not selected and partnership agreements with roles, contributions and responsibilities defined.</p> <p>In short, the proposal did not read like a completed plan but more an idea in early stages of planning.</p>		

Total	210	102
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Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0076MN-3 for Lynd Public School District

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3
(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant sets forth a vision meant to build on the notion of recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining efficient teachers and administrators, however there are no details listed that articulates how this approach will accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, or increasing equity through personalized student support grounded in common/individual student academic interest. Additionally, there is no description of personalized learning environments in classroom experiences present in the explanation of the vision. Finally, the applicant’s vision lacks coherence in that the number of participating school districts back and forth between 5 and 6, calling into question the level</p>		

of in depth planning and commitment required to institute change on the scale necessary to meet the high standards of this grant. The lack of specificity and detail for the applicant's stated vision of reform is detrimental to the overall comprehensive and coherent understanding of the reform vision

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

10

7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's narrative briefly outlines that all the 10 schools within the districts of the consortium meet the competition's eligibility requirements and have been chosen for implementation of the proposal. That is a total of approximately 2,002 students who will be impacted in this proposal. Further, the applicant provides a table A2 identifying the schools as well as the number/percentage of participating students and educators. Again there is confusion about the number of districts and schools in the consortium as the narrative states that there are 5 districts yet list 6 districts in the next paragraph. There are however, only 5 districts and their schools data listed in the table A2. While brief, the narrative and accompanying table meet the necessary requirements however the over site of St. James School District in such a brief narrative causes unnecessary confusion and lingering concerns about the in depth nature of planing by this consortium.

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

10

4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant includes a plan for consortium wide reform which has the key short term goals of increasing the data availability, students participating in STEM and other on line courses, teachers and students utilizing personalized learning systems, teachers are using student and classroom level data to drive teaching strategies. The long term key goals are to increased student achievement, increased teacher retention, and increased ability to recruit high quality teachers.. The plan has a time line with activities and personnel responsible for the activity, curiously one of the first activities in the applicant's Logic Model is to hire RTTT Staff, however that personnel is not listed in any of the Activities as the person(s) responsible, leaving one to question the planning of the Logic Model and proposal in total in regards to hiring RTTT staff. There is no rationale for the activities presented in the narrative, of either the Logic Model or the Table nor any specifics as to what STEM activities, Personalized Student Learning Environments, or Curriculum plans will look like or how they will be implemented or the impact on student achievement. These are critical areas of systematic reform needing more thought and planning.

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

10

4

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's vision for growth is not ambitious. The plan lists the goals for student growth to increase 3% for most grades over the 4 year period of the grant. One would expect to see progress accelerate in the latter years of the grant as the systematic reform takes root. Additionally, the data projections in Table A4a do not provide sufficient data to evaluate the proposal to close the achievement gaps for LEP subgroup and F/R subgroup in math or Hispanic, SPED, LEAP, and F/R subgroups in Reading. There is no narrative to explain the methodology for determining the achievement gaps. Additionally there is no baseline state required growth data to compare the goals to, which would indicate the level of the applicant's response to having ambitious yet achievable. The data (Table A4b) that is presented is based on the 25 member district consortia not the individual schools the current consortia represents. The applicant's narrative indicates a general level of increased Graduation rate and College enrollment by stating that the proposed cradle to career approach will impact these indicators by better preparing students and focusing on STEM courses of study.

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

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant chose to include data from the Improving Student Achievement Initiative which is a collaborative group of 25 school districts of which 5 have worked together to present the current Minnesota Rural RTT Project proposal. This applicant goes on to provide AYP index Rates Goals for Reading and Math from the larger

consortium involved in the Improving Student Achievement Initiative. This data is skewed in that it does not exclusively provide achievement results for the current consortia Minnesota Rural RTT Project. Further, the results are at best evidence minimal to flat growth with the Improving Student Achievement Initiative not meeting the state set goal any year from 2009-2012 and Index Rate dropping from baseline 2009 80.67 to Index Rate of 79.75 in 2010 in Reading. The 2012 AYP data for Math is not readable and the actual 2012 Math Index Rate is missing. The individual data presented for Hendricks, Lynd, RTR, and Sleepy Eye School Districts provide evidence of minimal to fluctuating progress with no system showing a clear tract record of success in the data provided. The applicant states that while there are no persistently lowest-achieving schools or low-performing schools within the consortia, they will "re-tool" existing PLC's and continue Differentiated Instruction. The applicant's narrative does not explain how the presently existing PLC or DI has positively affected reform. The applicant explains that student performance data is made available to students, educators, and parents through data boards, and data walls. Additionally, students and educators have conferences to discuss student progress and send out Progress Reports to Parents. While these avenues do provide data to stakeholders, there is present only surface data distribution, which does not allow for improved participation, instruction, or services. This is a critical piece necessary to ensure success of any proposal.

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

The applicant does not have a high level of transparency in reporting processes, practices, and investments. The applicant provides a brief narrative which pledges to be transparent and accountable, however there is no in depth description of the processes that the consortia will follow beyond a vague statement that the applicant will comply with Minnesota Statutes to publish annual budgets and that information outlined in (B) (2)(a), (b), (c), and (d) will be reviewed by each LEA. Nor are there any examples of how the consortia will ensure stakeholders have access to information.

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

The applicant indicates that the state legal, statutory, or regulatory requirements as they currently exist in Minnesota will ensure success. However, the applicant does not clearly articulate how the personalized learning environment will be implemented within the districts. One cannot evaluate the chances of successful implementation based on the general description found in the narrative.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (15 points)	15	5
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(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not include a description of how families, students, teachers, or principals from the participating schools were engaged in the development of the proposal, nor were there any evidence that the proposal was revised based on stakeholder engagement or feedback. Engagement in developing the proposal is critical to stakeholder buy-in, this piece is insufficiently evidenced in the proposal. Likewise, there is no evidence of parent or parent organizations support, nor of teacher unions support, however the community support is evidenced by 3 mayors submitting letters of encouragement and support. Overall the proposal is made weaker by the noticeable lack of stakeholder engagement.

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

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	5

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant outlines a plan based on the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's Principles of Student Centered Learning study for 2010. The applicant does provide an additional copy of the overall project implementation plan with activities, deliverables, a time frame, which designates a person(s) responsible for the activity. Additionally, the applicant proposes to small group tutor and/or one:one tutoring to high needs students. The applicant provides a chart of the suggested Elements corresponding with a summary explanation of the path the applicant means to use to address individual elements. The explanations do not provide clear tractable models for engaging or empowering all learners. Nor are there any plans to engage all stakeholders in the process. Additionally, there is no discussion of the current state of availability of the materials, hardware, software, and/or man power to implement the proposal, not to mention there is only brief discussion

about providing training and support to students at the beginning of each semester to ensure they understand how to use the tools and resources provided to them in order to track and manage their learning. This section of a proposal must be a crystal clear fully articulated response that allows the reviewer to completely envision the proposed process of Preparing Students for College and Careers. The applicant falls short in this area of the proposal.

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

20

12

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's approach to improve instruction and increase educators capacity to support student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready standards or college- and career-ready graduation requirements is to focus on dynamic and intense professional development opportunities for teachers around data driven instruction, personalized learning, the yet to be created new data systems, and utilizing assessments and standards for all age levels. One area that the proposal fails to fully discuss is how the teachers' and principals' practice and effectiveness will be supported. The applicant briefly engages the subject with a vague statement, "Our proposed teacher and principal evaluation system will be based largely on student achievement." But there is not a clear plan for support for ineffective teachers or leaders only that monitoring will occur 3 times a year with individual feedback given. The applicant has a general plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and specialty areas. The proposal lacks specificity in that the broad nature of the proposal summarizes the activities in general but does not list time lines or rationals for activities. Additionally, the critical component to this approach is to improve instruction though the use of increased compensation to effective and highly effective teachers.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, and rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant, for the most part, proposes policies that will facilitate systematic change though educator reform. The proposal would centralize all RTT staff in the main office of the lead applicant (Lynd Public School District) to facilitate collaboration and communication, the narrative does outline a plan to ensure this group provides support and/or services to all participating schools. The narrative outlines that School leadership teams will have flexibility and autonomy over most school level factors such as school schedules, recruitment and hiring of new personnel, and spending decisions at the school level. The proposal strongly supports giving students multiple and diverse opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards and to earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. However, the proposal does not outline all the necessary components of a high quality plan in that there is no specific time line or detailed deliverables in the proposal. Additionally, there is little explanation of the use of interoperable data systems to include all necessary data.

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

10

6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a loose plan to ensure that the LEA and school infrastructure supports personalized learning while trying to ensure autonomy for individual schools and their difference in teaching strategies. Unfortunately, the generalized description of the support for students may result in high needs students not receiving the necessary support to fully engage in personalized learning activities. The plan does outline levels of technical support, however, there is not much emphasis on improving support to parents other than the traditional annual orientation sessions. There is no evidence of any planned parental workshops to support this rural parents who may not be familiar with technology proposed in this application.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	6

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a general broad overview of their plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process, one that does not include clear timelines or persons responsible for gathering/analyzing the data, nor how feedback will be timely and regular to ensure ongoing corrections and improvements during and after the term of the grant. The proposal generalizes that information will be publicly shared through newsletters, websites, school board meetings, and annual reports. This is a critical component to ensuring over all stakeholder buy in and implementation of system wide change that needs more attention to detail.

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

5

3

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes a plan for communication with internal and external stakeholders, but does not clearly delineate which "Leadership Team" will be responsible for monitoring the plan. Additionally, the engagement piece of the plan is weak in that there is no description of process of engagement of all stakeholders beyond, "surveys and feedback."

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

5

2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant only has a total of 6 performance measures, thereby not meeting the requirement of at least 12-14 performance measures outlined in the directions. This oversight is particularly concerning in that all grade levels are located in the scope of the proposal. The applicant does list annual targets for the 6 performance measures. The applicant chooses to list the performance measures and a brief rationale for choosing the measure without explaining how the measure will provide rigorous, timely, or formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding implementation success or areas of concern.

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

5

3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes to use an external evaluator to collect survey data and analysis of annual and bi-annual reports of student achievement from standardized state test, Adequate Yearly Progress results, evaluations of teachers/principals, and faculty surveys in order to ensure reliability and validity of project strategies and outcomes. The applicant has developed a plan with high quality elements such as: timeline, identifying the responsible party, and providing a rationale for the activities. The proposed plan of evaluating the effectiveness of investments depends heavily on yearly analysis with only the reading/math proficiency components being analyzed frequently. Additionally, the proposed plan is not rigorous nor is it geared in such a way as to offer evaluative information about the technological activities proposed (STEM activities, online courses, et) in the plan.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	4
(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant includes a budget narrative and table that do not have sufficient coherent detail to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. Additionally, the applicant choose to not include total revenue for all the funds or a plan for long term sustainability of the proposal. Finally, there is not a clear rationale for investments and priorities. These are key elements that ensure depth on planning to enact system wide change.</p>		
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	4
(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:		
<p>The applicant does not include all aspects of a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. Namely, the proposal lacks a time line, person(s) responsible, and specific deliverables. Further, the proposal lacks a description of how the applicant will evaluate the effectiveness of past investments and use the data to inform future investments. The proposal does lean heavily on the idea braiding currently existing funds in such a way as to ensure</p>		

sustainability of the proposal. The details are not specific or well defined, possibly due to the nature of consortia.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant chooses to describe the role a proposed Community Liaison will play in the development of this proposal as opposed to partnering with community public or private organization to support the plan. The applicant proposes a broad generalized partnership to ensure all students are healthy and learning is community wide in the Southwest Minnesota Rural RTT Project. The aggregate data for achievement, attendance, suspension, and expulsions will be tracked at the school building level. However the plan does not lay out how the results will be used to target resources in order to improve results for participating students nor is there any discussion of a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating schools over time. Further, the applicant does not provide sufficient detail to ensure that these partnerships will impact target schools by engaging local organizations to provide services. There are only generalized explanations with little practical description for such services. Finally, the applicant annual ambitious yet achievable performance measures do not have readable Desired Results as the last sentence is cut off in most of the boxes. There is no evidence of a plan to monitor progress toward goals. These are critical components which indicates the level of comment to the Partnership with the communities.

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environments

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1		Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a proposal which does not coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the core educational assurance areas through the use of personalized learning environments. The proposal hinges on increasing teacher effectiveness through the use of incentives as teachers meet and complete milestones and required activities. The increased focus on incentivizing effective teachers and principals comes with a decreased emphasis on total stakeholder involvement. This critical component is necessary for any system wide change that would produce lasting effects on student achievement.

Total	210	94
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