

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/20/2014 05:54 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	15	15
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	10
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	24
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	10	8
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	18
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	94
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Technology</b>		
1. CPP: Technology	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Total</b>	105	99

# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Development & Dissemination Grant Program - 7: 84.351D

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

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 1 - Need for Project in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

#### Strengths:

N/A

#### Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 15

#### Sub Question

1. (a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

#### Strengths:

The applicant clearly describes the population targeted to receive services based on the changing demographics outlined and documented in Figures 1, 2 and 3 (pages 2 and 3). Further, Tables 2, 3, (pages 3 and 4) provide assessment results in reading and mathematics for each of the target schools, along with demographic and low-income characteristics. These figures and tables together, provide undeniable evidence and documentation of the needs of the students at risk of educational failure and the rationale for selecting the four target schools. Specifically of interest is the downward trend in five of the nine elementary schools in the district. Four of these schools have been selected for project participation.

#### Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

#### Reader's Score:

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

#### Strengths:

The major gaps and weaknesses are extensively addressed and include lack of instruction, access to art, decrease of classroom creativity, lack of formal community involvement and decrease in special services. Each area is explicitly described and includes the applicant's efforts to address the gaps and weaknesses through the proposed project goals and objectives. Examples include co-designing the curriculum to enable classroom teachers to learn

**Sub Question**

and utilize relevant art language and concepts, field trips and guest instructors, along with a comprehensive professional development program. The examples provided are specifically aligned with expected project outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Significance**

**1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:**

**The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.**

**Strengths:**

Products to be developed are specifically described on page 11 and include training manuals, web access information and teaching strategies. These products will have excellent utility in replication of the project in other settings. Models for professional development and strategies are often sought after by school districts, teachers, and administrators who want to support teacher training in their schools. The web access makes the program available to others across the country and international locations.

In addition to addressing the utility of the products and processes, the applicant provides a description of dissemination efforts to ensure that valuable information regarding project replication will be made available to others, thus providing both knowledge and access.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 3 - Quality of Project Design in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

N/A

**Weaknesses:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 24**

**Sub Question**

1. (a) **The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a comprehensive knowledge base to support the design of the proposed project. Specifically, the research and effective practices focus on the importance and the proven impact of arts integration on student achievement and success. An extensive list of the benefits of the arts are presented on page 15 and supported by the National Task Force on the Arts in Education among other researchers and organizations cited.

The applicant explicitly delineates goals and objectives for the project, along with a logic model on page 17(Figure 4) that further describes the intent of the project. There is strong connectivity between the goals, objectives, activities and expected outcomes for students and teachers which clearly links with research based best practices cited by the applicant (page 5 & 15- 16) and further supported by the Project IMAGINE Framework in Figure 5 on page 18.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant should consider adding additional and more updated references to ensure the design reflects current research and effective practices.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) **The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant comprehensively describes the goals, objectives, and activities that are based on strong theory. There is a transparent alignment of project implementation tasks with effective research based strategies creating an ambitious but achievable project design.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

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

**Strengths:**

The proposed project is clearly supported by chief district administrators as described in letters of support. Project IMAGINE has positioned itself to be a partner and resource for the school district and the school community. The proposed project specifically aligns with the district's comprehensive plan framework as noted on pages 29-30.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted

**Reader's Score:**

**4. (d) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has given great thought to incorporating project activities into the ongoing work beyond the life of the grant. Specifically, the applicant has garnered support from the school district, parent/teacher organizations, and the community. Evidence is provided in letters of support and partnerships formed during the pre-study pilot year. The applicant will also solicit support for fundraising and anticipates funding from other organizations that support the arts if funding is available.

Additionally, several components of the proposed project, specifically professional development for teachers, can easily become a part of the ongoing school program without excess cost, benefiting veteran, current, and future teachers.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

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

**In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

**The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has selected project personnel with specific qualifications and experiences to provide oversight and implementation of the proposed project. Expertise includes project administrator, artist, educator, community organizer, and evaluator among others.

**Weaknesses:**

Considering all positions have been filled, the applicant has no opportunity to recruit additional personnel to existing staff with consideration given to hiring qualified individuals from underrepresented groups. The applicant appears to not be represented on the management team. The absence representation on the management team will leave a major void and lack of feedback regarding the progress of the project over time.

**Reader's Score: 8**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 5 - Management Plan in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.

The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

**Strengths:**

N/A

**Weaknesses:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 18**

**Sub Question**

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

**Strengths:**

The management plan is comprehensive and includes specific milestones, project timeline, and lead responsibility for the two objectives to be implemented by the proposed project (p.38-39). Additionally, the applicant intends to form a management team and advisory committee. The formation of the team and committee will provide additional oversight and accountability for project implementation. The composition of the advisory committee is broad and inclusive of the management team, schools, district and other community organizations.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

**Strengths:**

Responsibilities are further delineated in the staff chart on page 40. Providing a separate staffing chart adds more transparency to the management plan. Based on the chart, the key staff time allotments appear sufficient to adequately meet the objectives of the proposal on time and on budget.

**Weaknesses:**

Though the applicant includes a full time Project Manager, it is unclear how the applicant determined that 180 hours, which is 22.5 days per year would be adequate for the responsibilities assigned to the Co-PIs and Art Consultant.

**Reader's Score:**

3. (c) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the

**Sub Question**

**operation of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant sufficiently addresses procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement. Procedures such as frequent meetings between the Management Team, evaluators, and participating teachers is described, along with four areas of focus for continuous improvement. The four areas are listed on page 41. Additionally, the project timeline on page 38 includes periodic checkpoints to refine as needed, providing another level of continuous improvement.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

- 1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 6 - Project Evaluation in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

N/A

**Weaknesses:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 19**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (a) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant will use a mixed-methods evaluation which includes qualitative and quantitative data collection. A mixed-methods design ensures the use of evaluative instruments that will yield both teacher feedback and student achievement data. These forms of data provide ease of interpretation.

As the proposed project is implemented, the applicant will provide both formative and summative evaluation, yielding feedback on development and testing of the curriculum, along with impact of the program on the target populations.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

2. **(b) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has selected methods of evaluation that will allow for periodic assessment of progress, thus allowing ample opportunity to make revisions throughout the implementation of the project. Use of quarterly evaluation updates will allow the management team to adjust the program implementation and creates an on-going feedback loop for continuous progress and improvement.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses are noted.

**Reader's Score:**

3. **(c) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence of promise (as defined in the notice.)**

**Strengths:**

A longitudinal quasi-experimental design is described as a component of the evaluation to be used in order to ensure evidence of promise is obtained (p. 42). The applicant will plan for the control groups in Year 2 and 3 of project implementation and provides specific criteria for selection on p. 44. The applicant references the What Works Clearinghouse Guidelines for Quasi-experimental designs on page 48. Use of this reference expressly indicates the applicant's efforts to address the fidelity of implementation and produce evidence of promise.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not clearly describe how they will access data from the school district, which is critical to determine progress in student achievement. There is a lack of clarity regarding the number of participating schools and teachers in the project based on information in the abstract and information on page 49.

**Reader's Score:**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Technology**

1. **Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a well synthesized technology plan that is woven throughout the proposed project. The descriptive information provided on page 49 clearly delineates high quality digital tools and materials will be integral components of the project. Tools such as a digital learning platform for teachers, has great promise for providing support to teacher on an on-going basis. Additionally, learning labs, digital video trainings, audio podcasts, Smart boards, digital cameras and other tools will ensure engagement of students and renewal of teachers.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses were noted.

**Reader's Score:**     **5**

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**Status:**           Submitted  
**Last Updated:**   06/20/2014 05:54 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/19/2014 02:38 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	15	15
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	9
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	23
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	10	7
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	18
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	91
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Technology</b>		
1. CPP: Technology	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Total</b>	105	96

# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Development & Dissemination Grant Program - 7: 84.351D

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

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 1 - Need for Project in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

#### Strengths:

N/a

#### Weaknesses:

N/a

Reader's Score: 15

#### Sub Question

1. (a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

#### Strengths:

This project will provide services to a school system that has a large number of students who are ELL and low SES. Three of the four schools in which the project takes place have the highest rate of FRPL in the state. Further, there is a downward trend in mathematics and reading scores for the schools in the study. These students are in need both due to their background characteristics, which indicate they have low access to the arts, and due to their low performance in academics.

#### Weaknesses:

None.

Reader's Score:

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

#### Strengths:

This project will address many gaps and weaknesses – lack of art instruction, access to art, an observed decrease of classroom activity, lack of formal community involvement, and a decrease in special services. It will target the fact that arts education in the District in which the study takes place is not comprehensive, linked to core content curriculum, and is allotted very little time in the daily schedule of students. It will provide access to art education to students who would not normally have access, ameliorate the trend of 'teaching to the test', create partnerships between schools, parents, and the community, as well as engage students who are increasingly receiving fewer

**Sub Question**

and fewer services due to budget constraints by engaging them in art.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Significance**

**1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:**

**The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.**

**Strengths:**

The applicants have devised a very thorough plan to develop specific products that will allow this program to be employed by others in different settings. In particular, they will create a replication manual, teaching strategies, and a training manual, all of which will be available to anyone who is interested in implementing the programs designed through this study. They will also design a website in which they will provide all strategies and materials produced by the project. The program is also designed to be fully integrated in existing curricula and would not require any costs of implementing 'add-on' programs. The narrative also proposes a good dissemination plan to share the models and strategies designed through various academic journals so that others may find out about this program and its purported benefits. Embedded in the project's narrative is a plan for sustainability. This includes the creation of all the aforementioned materials, but also establishing collaborations between stakeholders in and out of schools, and including pre-service teachers as part of the project participants in order to inculcate the logic behind the model in the young generations of teachers. The applicants plan to put everything in place so that the project is replicable in other settings.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicants do not indicate whether the materials will be available free of charge. This is important to establish to gauge the extent of the availability of the resources developed in the project to others.

**Reader's Score: 9**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design**

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 3 - Quality of Project Design in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

N/a

**Weaknesses:**

N/a

Sub Question

1. (a) The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.

**Strengths:**

The applicants provide some evidence on the past success of arts education in increasing student achievement and other outcomes such as motivation and creativity. They effectively cite how arts support teaching of the core content areas. For example, arts education can often mimic the principles of differentiated instruction, encouraging flexible thinking, collaboration, critical thinking among many other skills.

**Weaknesses:**

Applicants demonstrate that arts education matters but they are not very clear as to the process through which it affects achievement in the core subjects. If there is no literature to explain such a process, then the applicants should have been clear about that gap in research.

Reader's Score:

2. (b) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory.

**Strengths:**

It is thoroughly devised and well-written. Figure 4 shows the logic model for teachers and experts and for students. It is a well developed model. The applicants discuss each facet of the logic model in detail and demonstrate that they have thoroughly and extensively considered the logistics of carrying out their project. The facets are described in depth and the link between the program inputs, school inputs, teacher and expert activities, teacher and expert short-term outcomes, and teacher and expert long-term outcomes are described. The professional development is designed according to theory as well.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicants do not cite sources that they utilized in developing their logic model. It is not clear whether it is inspired or based on existing logic models. If the applicants designed the logic model based on practice, then they should have been clear about it.

Reader's Score:

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

**Strengths:**

The project is based on a mini-pilot project that was already implemented in a school. In this way, the proposed project fits nicely with existing efforts, which according to the applicants, received good buy in and feedback from those involved, particularly schools administration and PTOs. In addition, this project will support the District's efforts to improve teaching and learning as well as to improve partnerships across the community.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

Reader's Score:

4. (d) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The project has received the commitment of various stakeholders that would support its existence and continuation beyond the grant. In addition, the applicants state that the continuation would be further supported through some fundraising efforts. The applicants have designed a thorough plan to ensure the ability of the program to be replicated and continued beyond the grant by proposing to develop materials such as replication manual, teaching strategies, a training manual, and a website in which they will provide all strategies and materials produced by the project. Also, the partnerships they have established and will continue to foster will allow the program to continue as well. Finally, the inculcation of the project's vision into pre-service teachers helps generate buy in from those who are just entering the teaching profession. The applicants propose a change of culture by targeting various stakeholders knowledge and commitment to arts education that will surely enhance the potential for this program to be sustainable beyond the grant.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

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

**In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

**The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

**Strengths:**

Personnel seem adequately qualified to fulfill their assigned roles as well as ensure the success of the project. Altogether, they bring years of experience in teaching, arts education, engagement in the community, curriculum development, teacher training, and research design and analysis.

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant, Youth in Action, is not listed as key personnel or in the management team. The project director does not have any experience managing a grant (including budget management).

**Reader's Score:      7**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 5 - Management Plan in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

N/a

**Weaknesses:**

N/a

**Reader's Score:** 18

**Sub Question**

1. (a) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

The applicants propose an extremely thorough and well designed management plan. They are clear as to when milestones will be met and who is responsible for ensuring completion. The plan is clearly linked to the tasks the applicants delineated in the project design. They allot time for continuous and frequent meetings to ensure quality of the program, to identify any problems or delays and to target and address them. They propose a management team and an advisory committee, both of which will fulfill important roles in ensuring the success of the program.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The time of project personnel reflects the responsibility that they will have within the project. A full-time program manager is adequately budgeted for to ensure appropriate management of the project.

**Weaknesses:**

The time allotted to the Co-PI is not adequate considering the role that she will play. One-hundred and eighty hours per year will amount to 4-5 hours per week, many of which will be spent on meetings.

**Reader's Score:**

3. (c) **The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

There are numerous points in which the project personnel will ensure that milestones are met. Consultants will submit monthly progress reports to the project director, the management team will meet bi-weekly for the first six months, and monthly thereafter, and the PI and other consultants will prepare annual reports. In addition, evaluation of objectives is embedded within the timeline. The management team will also regularly meet with teachers and will work to identify which strategies are working and which are not and modify them accordingly.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Sub Question**

**Reader's Score:**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

- 1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 6 - Project Evaluation in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

N/a

**Weaknesses:**

N/a

**Reader's Score: 19**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (a) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

**Strengths:**

Formative and summative evaluations will form the bulk of the evaluations for this project. Teacher data will be gathered via teacher surveys, logs and interviews. Their level of knowledge, comfort, fidelity of implementation, and experience with all aspects of the program will be measured. Student data will be gathered via quantitative assessments in the core subjects, student surveys, and an evaluation of student creativity. Their achievement will be captured via the quantitative assessments, while their creativity will be gauged by utilizing the Next Generation Creativity Survey. Student surveys will measure the other outcomes.

**Weaknesses:**

No psychometric information is presented on the existing instruments that they will employ. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the validity and reliability and thus quality of the selected instruments.

**Reader's Score:**

- 2. (b) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**Strengths:**

The applicants have designed research questions for each year, which allows them to effectively measure success and modify any aspects of the project as needed each year. Each year also builds on the previous. For example, the research questions for the first year are related to the design of professional development and programs to be implemented in the following years.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Sub Question**

**Reader's Score:**

3. (c) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence of promise (as defined in the notice.)

**Strengths:**

This study proposes a quasi-experimental design. The intervention groups will be formed from volunteer teachers at the study schools. Control groups will be formed via matching on demographic characteristics. The evaluator on the project will check that the design adheres to the WWC standards for quasi experiments in order to improve its likelihood of providing evidence of causal effects. Pretests will be included in the statistical model as a control for pre-existing differences.

**Weaknesses:**

This project could have a stronger design if it randomly assigned classrooms or schools to condition. No rationale is provided as to what impedes the possibility of random assignment. It is also unclear whether four schools have already committed to participating and whether all of the teachers in each school will participate. If not, then it is unclear how teachers will be selected.

**Reader's Score:**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Technology**

1. Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

**Strengths:**

The project will avail students with access to a large number of modern technologies. Examples include animation production software, digital photography, and 3D modeling software. The narrative is clear as to how technology will be used for arts education and it itself is very creative in the process it will do so. Because technology is sufficiently embedded into the program being delivered, and due to the logic model being so thorough, the technology in this project has the potential to positively impact student achievement.

**Weaknesses:**

None.

**Reader's Score:** 5

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 06/19/2014 02:38 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/20/2014 06:27 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Need for Project</b>		
1. Need for Project	15	15
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	10	8
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	22
<b>Quality of Project Personnel</b>		
1. Project Personnel	10	7
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management Plan	20	17
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
<b>Sub Total</b>	100	85
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Preference Priority 2</b>		
<b>Technology</b>		
1. CPP: Technology	5	4
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	4
<b>Total</b>	105	89

# Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - Development & Dissemination Grant Program - 7: 84.351D

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

Applicant: Youth in Action (U351D140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 1 - Need for Project in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.

The Secretary considers the need for the proposed project by considering the following factors:

#### Strengths:

See below.

#### Weaknesses:

See below.

Reader's Score: 15

#### Sub Question

1. (a) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.

#### Strengths:

Project Imagine will address the needs of children at four schools within Portland Public Schools in Maine. The proposal provides strong evidence of a high risk of educational failure for students at these schools, such as low income, ELL participation, decreasing test scores in both math and reading, and high minority student enrollments (p. 1-4). The applicant compares the demographics of the four targeted schools within the district to the remaining five, making a compelling reason for their selection.

The data was provided in table formats that were easy to interpret, well-structured, and provided the necessary evidence.

#### Weaknesses:

No weakness noted.

#### Reader's Score:

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

#### Strengths:

The proposal identified and discussed five gaps/weaknesses in arts integration services and infrastructure within (and beyond) the schools, each of which will be addressed through Project Imagine. The gaps and weaknesses

### Sub Question

reflect the critical issues in art education: lack of access, instruction, community involvement, accommodations for special populations, and the the decrease in overall classroom creativity. Evidence is provided to support these gaps, including local school schedules (documenting, for example, only 35 hours of arts education in a 37-week calendar) (p. 8).

The nature and magnitude of the gaps is addressed in the narrative, using local examples (time in class, p. 8) as well as support from empirical studies (arts-engaged low-income student performance, p. 10). These multiple examples provide a more convincing response.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

#### **Reader's Score:**

### Selection Criteria - Significance

#### **1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project by considering the following factor:**

**The likely utility of the products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that will result from the proposed project, including the potential for their being used effectively in a variety of other settings.**

#### **Strengths:**

The proposal includes descriptions of numerous products that would result from the implementation and success of Project Imagine, such as replication and training manuals (p. 11-12). Appropriate details are offered that outline the specific contents for each product.

The applicant provides information on the planned dissemination of products and results (p. 13), including through reviewed national journals and via an online data base developed and maintained in house (p. 13). In both of these cases, the process will showcase the work which will be excellent for both.

#### **Weaknesses:**

It is unclear who actually owns the work and is ultimately responsible for its significance and replicating and sharing the work or not. The Project Director and all of the working staff are contractors and Youth in Action, the actual federal applicant, includes a fee to itself in the budget for \$25,000 to serve as the Fiscal Agent. There is no clarity on the ownership of any products.

**Reader's Score: 8**

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 3 - Quality of Project Design in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

See below.

**Weaknesses:**

See below.

**Reader's Score:** 22

**Sub Question**

1. (a) **The extent to which the design of the proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices.**

**Strengths:**

The design of the proposal is well grounded in relevant and current research in the field. Evidence of research support is rampant throughout the proposal and includes references to empirical studies in education, the arts, teaching and learning, students with specific demographics, combinations of all of these factors, and other elements of the project. Research is targeted and specific and demonstrates significant planning. Examples include those on pages 9, 10, and 15.

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal includes research references that are not current, such as the study by Heath from 1998. These older references serve as distractions to the point of the narrative. Generally, however, other supporting work that is more recent is also cited.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) **The extent to which the proposed project is supported by strong theory.**

**Strengths:**

The proposal provides a strong theoretical base for the project (p. 14-15), weaving a convincing argument for support from a series of research studies. The narrative follows a logical path that moves from support of the arts to enhance too learning to narrow the achievement gap through arts education and into success in the workplace. The applicant uses research studies, results from the National Task Force, and the State of Maine learning results to support the theory behind the project. The response is comprehensive, clear, and focused.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

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

**Strengths:**

The proposal references the school district's Comprehensive Plan Framework and related strategies that include increasing student achievement in reading and math in elementary schools as well as developing critical skills that extend beyond regular classwork (p. 29-30). As noted earlier, Maine Learning Results from 2007 stated that connecting the arts to other content areas improved teaching and learning (p. 15).

The implementation of Project Imagine began with a test bed school site supported and nurtured by the district (p. 21). The success of the project as a pilot led to interest in program expansion that can be considered part of a comprehensive effort.

## Sub Question

### **Weaknesses:**

Although the narrative includes references to a district Comprehensive Plan Framework, the applicant does not provide adequate support to demonstrate that the project is a part of a comprehensive effort – rather than an general reference - to improve teaching and learning and to support rigorous academic standards in art, math, reading/language arts, or any other content area. While support for the program itself is evident from the letters included in the proposal, the narrative lacks a description of any comprehensive effort to bring Project Imagine into the fold of a larger commitment to improve teaching and learning. An example might include a district- and community-wide focus on elementary reading in which Project Imagine plays a critical role at four high-risk schools emphasizing reading success through arts integration.

### **Reader's Score:**

4. **(d) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.**

### **Strengths:**

The intent of Project Imagine is to become fully integrated into each participating classroom as a part of the grade and school culture and be repeated annually (p. 30). Throughout the funding period teachers and other key individuals attend a two-year cycle of trainings and workshops that support sustainability after 2018 (p. 30). University arts and general education student teachers will co-teach with mentor teachers on this project, sharing their experiences with their fellow students during a required weekly seminar and documenting the work for their professional portfolios (p. 25). Upon graduation, they will enter the teaching profession aware of the significance of arts-infused academics and the knowledge of how to be successful in its implementation.

The proposal includes the production of a replication model that will allow schools and districts a blueprint for designing a plan for their own students and other publications that will support fidelity to the original model (p. 30).

Each of these elements strongly supports the sustainability of the project beyond grant funding, continuing the project purpose and key activities.

### **Weaknesses:**

The proposal does not provide information on the specific source of support for the applicant to continue the training, support, and expansion of the programming following the end of grant funding (p. 30). Collaborations and partnerships were developed during the pilot year, but no commitments are given that indicate financial (or any other) support to the other three schools during or after the grant funding. The proposal suggests that the schools' PTOs could be a viable source of up to \$30,000 per year per school (p. 32), but no history of giving is provided and low-income data provided earlier (p. 2-3) would suggest less discretionary income within these families.

### **Reader's Score:**

## **Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel**

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

**In addition, the Secretary considers the following factor:**

## **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

### **Strengths:**

The proposal includes an expanded anti-discrimination policy and practice for Youth in Action, Side x Side and USM; each partner will designate a staff to ensure compliance (p. 32). Women and members of underrepresented groups will be encouraged to apply for open positions. These efforts demonstrate the applicant's capacity to hire a diverse work force which supports the student population.

The application provides descriptions of relevant training, experience, and educational background of seven key personnel, including the Project Director, evaluator, and all members of the Management Team (p. 33-37). The resumes in the appendix offer additional evidence that these individuals have the capacity and knowledge to successfully plan and implement the project. The Project Director has an extensive background in the arts and the integration of arts into schools (resume). The leadership brings together non-profit organizations, public schools, and higher education and a combination of current classroom experience, researcher, and practicing artists. This full range of viewpoints increases the likelihood of a range of approaches and feedback that should strengthen the program.

### **Weaknesses:**

The narrative does not address how Youth in Action and Side x Side encourage applications for employment from individuals who have traditionally been underrepresented. Examples could include job postings in targeted newspapers or other publications, or working with job placement centers and college placement centers.

No one from the applicant organization – Youth in Action – is included as key personnel, has a resume included in the proposal or serves on the Management Team. As the fiscal agent, YIA would need to work closely with the budget manager to ensure fidelity to the budget and that the project is executed within budget.

While the resumes and the narrative descriptions provide significant insight, there is no information on relevant trainings for the key personnel that might be specifically targeted to the project at hand – or any other project. It would be useful to know if these individuals participate in professional development opportunities in their respective areas of specialization.

The Project Director will be responsible for the budget (p. 33). The proposal does not offer any evidence that the Project Director has any expertise or experience managing a budget of this size, managing a large grant, or managing a federal grant. This holds true for all key personnel with the exception of the Co-PI for Outreach who managed a \$250,000 Department of Energy grant that expired ten years ago. The Project Coordinator has finance background and education (p. 33), but is not charged with the responsibility of the budget.

The Project Director is also responsible for ensuring that milestones are met (p. 33). The Tasks/Milestones/Timeline Matrix included on pages 38-39 offers tasks but no milestones that would provide a benchmark to determine if the work were on target for completion on time. No milestones are provided for the Project Director.

**Reader's Score: 7**

## **Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 5 - Management Plan in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

See below.

**Weaknesses:**

See below.

**Reader's Score:** 17

**Sub Question**

1. (a) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

The proposal describes the relationship between the applicant (Youth in Action) and the operational organization (Side x Side) with adequate detail (p. 37). The development and use of a Management Team and an Advisory Committee will assist in providing multiple viewpoints, strategies, and creative thinking which should assist the work. Responsibilities are clearly outlined (p. 33-37) and personnel are assigned to each of the tasks (p. 38-39).

The management plan is illustrated in a chart format that offers tasks, timeline, and person responsible for each of the two objectives (p. 38-39). The full four years can be seen on the chart, allowing a view of the progression of the activities throughout the grant period. This is a useful chart to initiate a more detailed work plan.

**Weaknesses:**

The application does not address milestones for accomplishing the two objectives. While the term is included in the heading on the timeline chart (p. 38-39), the information listed refers only to the tasks, and not to milestones which would indicate if the work were on target for on time completion. An example for Task 1 under Objective 1 might include a milestone of the design completed by the end of the second quarter in the first year.

The school district plays a very minor role in the management plan, providing only one member of the Advisory Committee (p. 38). Given the involvement of many of the district's elementary schools, teachers, and low-income communities, and the critical importance of the subject matter, a closer relationship with district leaders and specialists might be valuable in expertise, stability, access to student data, and long-term sustainability.

The narrative does not address the adequacy of the management plan to meet the objectives within the budget.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

**Strengths:**

The Project Director/PI will spend 75% of her time on this project; the Project Coordinator, 100% (p. 40). This level of commitment will be sufficient to meet the objectives. Other key staff will add support throughout the grant period.

**Weaknesses:**

Two of the three Co-PIs have time commitments of 180 hours per year – essentially 4-5 hours per month. A significant portion of this time, especially at the onset of the program, will be spent attending and participating in

### Sub Question

Management Team meetings (p. 37). Their roles and their time commitments are not well supported.

The proposal shows the External Evaluator at 15% in years 1 and 2 and 20% in year 3 and 4 (p. 41). This is inconsistent with the Budget Narrative that shows a cost of \$75,000 for each of the first two years, increasing to \$100,000 for each of the last two years. If the \$100,000 per year represents 20% time, this would be the equivalent of a \$500,000 annual salary; most likely beyond the capacity and need of the grant. The evaluation of Objective 2 is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of year 1 while the initial work on the Objective begins in the fourth quarter with implementation the first quarter of year 2. The time commitment of either 15% or \$75,000 appears inappropriate without additional explanation of the work involved.

### Reader's Score:

#### 3. (c) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

##### Strengths:

Included in Project Imagine's model are numerous opportunities for revision and improvement based on feedback. An example includes the four annual meetings between the Management Team and teachers at each participating school to review and discuss progress towards objectives (p. 41). These meetings are part of the project's ongoing improvement cycle that collects data including feedback from principals, teachers, and students. The proposal provides evidence of planned opportunities to ensure feedback to improve the program throughout the grant.

Feedback will be provided, as well, through surveys and interviews with teachers and experts as part of the evaluation (p. 44). In addition to teacher logs, student surveys, and results from a student creativity survey, student achievement results will offer project leaders key information to guide future work, including revisions to the curriculum, timetable, or approach.

##### Weaknesses:

The narrative regularly refers to program benchmarks (i.e., meeting/not meeting them, and progress towards improving them (p. 41) in relation to continuous improvement and feedback. The proposal does not appear to include any benchmarks or milestones.

The Timeline chart on pages 38-39 does not include any opportunities for feedback, including the four meetings between schools and the Management Team, revisions based on feedback, or any corrections. Task 1 for Objective 2 refers to refinement, but this is work by the Program Manager/ Coordinator rather than the Management Team.

### Reader's Score:

#### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

**Please provide a brief summary and your scores for Question 6 - Project Evaluation in the space below. If you opt to not include a summary, please indicate N/A in the comment boxes. Your detailed analysis and comments for each of the sub-criteria should be provided in each of the subsequent, specific sub-questions. Scores are not captured at the sub-question level and can only be provided here.**

**The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project by considering the following factors:**

**Strengths:**

See below.

**Weaknesses:**

See below.

**Reader's Score:** 16

**Sub Question**

1. (a) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.**

**Strengths:**

A mixed-methods evaluation will include objective performance measures directly related to project outcomes; specifically, student achievement data in math and reading/language arts (p. 45). Additionally, qualitative data will be generated from numerous sources such as teacher and expert surveys and interviews, teacher logs, and student creativity surveys. The evaluation methods include a quasi-experimental study of the intervention complete with research questions (p. 46), likely to produce quantitative and qualitative data.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

2. (b) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

**Strengths:**

The Management Team will use quarterly evaluation updates to modify the program as needed throughout the grant to ensure a continuous feedback loop for project improvement (p. 48). Quarterly updates are included in the Timeline (p. 38-39). The resulting data from the quasi-experimental study (p. 46-47) has the potential to impact arts interventions and integration on a national level.

**Weaknesses:**

No weaknesses noted.

**Reader's Score:**

3. (c) **The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence of promise (as defined in the notice.)**

**Strengths:**

The methods of evaluation, statistical depth of the evaluation, capacity of the evaluators, and access to schools provide ample opportunities to produce evidence of promise regarding the direct link between the arts and student achievement in math and reading at the elementary level.

**Weaknesses:**

The evaluation does not address access of data from the school district, work with the district to organize data, or any other information that might not be available to the applicant and the evaluator that could impact or influence results leading to evidence of promise.

**Sub Question**

The quasi-experimental study described in the narrative uses a matched-pair comparison group model encouraging the participation of teacher applicants across the district from schools with 30% or higher low-poverty student populations (p. 47, 43). This is a different model from the model in the proposal in which four schools have been identified and all classes and teachers in grades kindergarten through five will participate (p. 3). This contradictory text reduces the credibility of the evaluation plan.

The evaluation methods will capture data for two operational years (p. 48), although the Project Imagine will be in the schools for three years, directly funded for four, and potentially sustained beyond that time. Given the high value of the evaluation and the project itself, additional evidence of promise, if not stronger research results, could benefit from an extended evaluation period.

**Reader's Score:**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Preference Priority 2 - Technology**

- 1. Projects that are designed to improve student achievement (as defined in the notice) or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

**Strengths:**

The proposal offers a variety of technologies for teacher support, student instruction, and creative learning (p. 49-50). Opportunities are provided for teacher professional development, including discussion forums and online workshops. The extensive list of digital options, including training on how to maximize their use, would be invaluable to professional educators as they move Project Imagine forward.

**Weaknesses:**

There is no timetable for the availability of these technology services or access to the programming (p. 49-50). More details are needed to describe, specifically, who will be responsible for the development and maintenance of the technology, how grant dependent is the technology, and who will train teachers in the use of these opportunities.

**Reader's Score:**      **4**

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