

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 05/29/2015 12:12 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grdes Reform (U367D150030)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	18
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Sustainability	15	14
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	100	97
Priority Questions		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
1. CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness	1	0
Sub Total	1	0
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
1. CPP3: Promoting STEM ED	2	0
Sub Total	2	0
CPP4: High-Need Students		
CPP4: High-Need Students		
1. CPP4: High-Need Students	4	4
Sub Total	4	4
Total	107	101

Technical Review Form

Panel #10 - 2015 SEED Peer Review - 10: 84.367D

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grdes Reform (U367D150030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.

Strengths:

The project proposes to pair English and Math content areas that are essential for keeping students on track for graduation. Involving 4 states which include 96 classrooms will provide data around effective practice that can be applied nationally.

Using findings from previous USDOE grants (I3) this project will provide training and coaching to teachers around effective practices identified in the "Schools to Watch" network around mathematics and English language arts integration and instruction. Additionally, there will be a focus on effective ELL strategies to strengthen vocabulary, a key indicator of being on track to graduate.

The middle school network is strong nationally and through their networks, best practices, coaching support, and dissemination of successful projects they have a significant impact on middle level educators. Teacher preparation programs often neglect focused study on the pedagogy of teaching middle level students.

The use of data from a previous I3 grant where growth was not occurring helped this project focus on the targeted goals of this proposal. It is a powerful model to use results from a grant where there were lower results than expected and include the target in the next proposal. It shows use of data to continuously improve practice and student achievement.

The applicants share important data about the middle grades being identified as the "last, best chance to keep students on the pathway to high school graduation" (p.e22). The data substantiated that indicators exist to raise concerns about the need to target middle grade students with specific interventions.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project will be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.
- (5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

Using findings from previous USDOE grants (I3), this project will provide training and coaching to teachers around effective practices identified in the “Schools to Watch” network around mathematics and English language arts integration and instruction. Additionally, there will be a focus on effective ELL strategies to strengthen vocabulary, a key indicator of being on track to graduate.

The Power of Two project will examine mathematics and language arts teacher in intervention classrooms where they will implement the Focused Intervention Model (FIM) and Academic Language Development (ALD) programs. The use of simultaneous doses of instructional support in both content areas is an effective approach. With students unable to understand the texts in math, they have a poor chance of being successful. This project works to incorporate the importance of comprehension with the curriculum needs of math.

Using past data from I3 grants, this project will examine two academic areas which research says are essential for staying on track for graduation – math and English language arts. Using the results from this project, they will add the learning environmental outcomes of their 2010 grant to accelerate middle-grades reform for students most in need. It is a powerful plan to build on previous grant successes and further hone the findings to share out with other schools.

The applicant provides a strong logic model on p. e37 that details the programs, services, and outcomes. The model provides an overview of what will be done to address the needs of the coaches and what types of trainings will occur.

Goals are clearly stated and strategies, outcomes, and measures are included. It is very clear the applicant has a thorough plan for this project. Additionally, tables to discuss roles and responsibilities and key deliverables are thoroughly outlined. The detail is outstanding.

The middle school network is strong nationally and, through their networks of best practices, coaching support, and dissemination of successful projects, they have a significant impact on middle level educators. Teacher preparation programs often neglect focused study on the pedagogy of teaching middle level students.

The applicants share important data about the middle grades being identified as the “last, best chance to keep students on the pathway to high school graduation” (p.e22). The data substantiated that indicators exist to raise concerns about the need to target middle grade students with specific interventions.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:

(1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.

(2) 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.

(3) The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.

Strengths:

The project has highly qualified personnel with expertise in middle school improvement and reform. It is clear the personnel have experience with mathematics, coaching models, and middle level education and will provide leadership for this project.

The plan is designed to coordinate the work across all four states with progress assessments each quarter. Using network platforms currently in place, the Forum will conduct webinars, online discussions, and oversee the implementation of the project. The infrastructure exists to achieve the objectives of the proposed project.

A part-time project manager and assistant will oversee the grant and report to the executive director of the Forum. Based on their experience with past grants, the project has allotted time and budget based on its work in taking on large-scale projects such as this. The project personnel are sufficient to meet the requirements of the proposal.

The applicant provided sufficient background information and demonstrated experiences with previous Federal grants to support their ability to understand the complexities and needed personnel and resources to accomplish the goals of the project.

Weaknesses:

Information about the timeline of the grant was provided in narrative form and thus difficult to get a clear complete view of the project. Inclusion of a chart detailing the roll-out of the grant (timelines, milestones, responsibilities, etc.) would have assisted in understanding the project. The previous tables were so well done that addition of a management plan with a timeline and implementation dates would have strengthened this proposal.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.

(3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

The Forum has a solid track record of continuing and expanding its work, even through challenging times. Their volunteer network consists of dedicated middle-grades educators nationwide who depend on the infrastructure, resources, and influence of the organization.

The Forum has a strong national presence and a track record impacting policy and practice throughout the country.

A strong dissemination network will make information about the effectiveness of this project available to all middle grade teachers and school leaders. There is a plan to provide training in the participant states, present at national conferences, and use the website and social media tools.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear whether there is a fee to access the Forum internet site and access resources. The application would be strengthened if there was information shared about non Forum members' ability to access the information.

It is unclear what the relationship of STW is to the Forum and how this group will interact with the Power of Two proposal. The reference to STW is significant in this grant, so clarification of whether it is an overarching network, a companion project, or a precursor to Power of Two would help reviewers understand the relationship and funding possibilities.

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers:**

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**
- (2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**
- (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.**

Note: We encourage applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation:

- (1) WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/idocviewer/doc.aspx?docid=19&tocid=1>; and**
- (2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech_methods/.**

In addition, we encourage applicants to participate in an optional Webinar hosted by the Institute of Education Sciences on March 6, 2015. This Webinar will discuss strategies for designing and executing well-designed Quasi-experimental Design Studies. Applicants interested in participating in this Webinar may find more information at the following Web site: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/event.aspx?sid=37>.

Strengths:

An independent evaluator will conduct the project evaluation providing an objective view of the results. Both qualitative and quantitative components will be used in the grant evaluation, and the project evaluation will provide performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress toward the outcomes.

The project's logic model on p. e60 gives a clear view of the applicant's theory of change and identifies a randomized controlled trial (RCT) and the method they will employ to evaluate project results. The What Works Clearinghouse accepts

that design as an acceptable standard of evidence. They also gave examples of the models showing how they will use the RCT.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness - CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost-Effectiveness)

This priority funds projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources (as defined in the notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this priority.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP3: Promoting STEM Education - CPP3: Promoting STEM Education

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

(Please only assign a score of either 0 or 2 for this question.)

This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:

(a) Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.

(b) Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on student growth (as defined in this notice).

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 3 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The priority was not addressed.

Weaknesses:

The priority was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP4: High-Need Students - CPP4: High-Need Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Supporting High-Need Students

This priority funds projects that are designed to improve:

- (a) Academic outcomes;
- (b) Learning environments; or
- (c) Both,

For one or more of the following groups of students:

- (i) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.
- (ii) Students with disabilities.
- (iii) English learners.
- (iv) Students in Lowest-performing Schools.
- (v) Students who are living in poverty and are served by schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty.
- (vi) Disconnected Youth or migrant youth.
- (vii) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 4 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The applicants identified their target population as students who are living in poverty and English Learners. They identified schools with larger populations of these groups who are most in need of the skills and language development that this project will provide.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 4

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grdes Reform (U367D150030)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	8
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	16
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	16
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Sustainability	15	13
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	100	73
Priority Questions		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
1. CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness	1	0
Sub Total	1	0
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
1. CPP3: Promoting STEM ED	2	0
Sub Total	2	0
CPP4: High-Need Students		
CPP4: High-Need Students		
1. CPP4: High-Need Students	4	3
Sub Total	4	3
Total	107	76

Technical Review Form

Panel #10 - 2015 SEED Peer Review - 10: 84.367D

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grdes Reform (U367D150030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.

Strengths:

The proposal builds a strong case for the importance of strong instruction in mathematics and English language arts for students in the middle grades utilizing data from multiple large-scale data sets such as ACT and NAEP (e22-e23). This builds a strong significance for the proposed project on a National Level. The proposal builds into the infrastructure of the Schools to Watch criteria that were involved in earlier research around the role of culture and climate in schools (e25-e26), extending the knowledge around advancement of teacher and school effectiveness best practices. The needs for the interventions in mathematics and science at the middle level are clearly articulated, and research around improvements would benefit the national community.

Weaknesses:

The connection between the research on the culture and climate of the Schools to Watch program and the Power of Two program proposal is unclear, specifically how that research is utilized to inform and further the preparation of teachers specific to the mathematics and English language arts goals of the proposal. Additionally, the FIM model from Michigan data references were specific to three middle schools (e29-e30), which is a small data set for suggesting scale to a multiple state cohort. It is also unclear how the research on FIM and ALD suggests that a model of integration would yield positive outcomes beyond the use of the models independently. The proposal would benefit from more clarity around how the research suggests that there is strong evidence for effectiveness around the actual proposed model of Power of Two to support a stronger case for significance for this proposal.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project will be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.

(5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

The personnel team has a strong variety of backgrounds to inform the work of the proposal, demonstrating a strong background of involvement with the organization and the STW efforts (e49-e53). The proposal references previous experience managing large grants with successful outcomes (e54). The management plan is present and defines project responsibilities specific to the partners involved in the process (e49-e53). The proposal management plan articulates specific and reasonable resources toward the achievement of the work to improve mathematics and English language arts through the Power of Two proposal for the targeted community.

Weaknesses:

The project personnel team qualifications lacked specific references and connections to the work and goals specific to the Power of Two proposal and program involvement (e49-e53). It would also be helpful to see more expertise specific to the FIM and ALD models proposed for intervention on the project leadership team.

In reference to the project management plan, it would be helpful to see how the project outlined milestones specific to the project goals presented in more detail, such as in the table presented with the details associated with the professional learning timeline. This would present additional clarity around the specific goals and the project management responsibility.

The proposal references that the targeted states have undertaken similar work over the last several years (e54). It would strengthen the proposal to see how the Power of Two work builds upon or into the previous efforts to demonstrate resource use and sustainability efforts. It would be helpful to see how the Forum fee charges would be included for an all-inclusive model for all individuals involved within the study to build capacity for work to continue beyond the scope of the grant.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:

(1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.

(2) 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.

(3) The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.

Strengths:

The personnel team has a strong variety of background to inform the work of the proposal, demonstrating a strong background of involvement with the organization and the STW efforts (e49-e53). The proposal references previous experience managing large grants with successful outcomes (e54).

Weaknesses:

The project personnel team qualifications lacked specific reference and connections to the work and goals specific to the Power of Two proposal and program involvement (e49-e53). It would also be helpful to see more expertise specific to the

FIM and ALD models proposed for intervention on the project leadership team.

It would be helpful to see how the project outlined milestones in a table or chart to bring those clarified in the table.

The proposal references that the targeted states have undertaken similar work over the last several years (e54). It would strengthen the proposal to see how the Power of Two work builds upon or into the previous efforts to demonstrate resource use and sustainability efforts. It would be helpful to see how the Forum fee charges would be included to all for an all inclusive model.

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.**
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.**
- (3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or strategies.**

Strengths:

The Forum demonstrates a strong commitment to the development and sustainment of STW sites through the capacity of their organization, as well as the efforts to obtain additional grant dollars (e55), demonstrating a designed capacity to yield results that extend beyond the grant period. The proposal describes the outcomes of a tracer study in 2003 that shows strong community response to the quality of resources from the Forum (e57), supporting the organization's capacity to be able to yield findings and products that would be useful to agencies and individuals beyond the specific scope of the project. The Forum has a clear plan for dissemination of data through their own communication channels, such as their website, as well as publicizing the data gained through conferences and other similar community-based platforms.

Weaknesses:

The proposal details how the Forum is committed to STW work, but it is not clear what sustainable actions are being taken toward STW beyond the grant work (e56). The proposal would benefit from articulating outcomes, such as the resources from the i3 grants (e55) described in demonstrating capacity for sustainable work. This would take the work beyond just sharing outcomes of the study to creating resources for similar implementation efforts in the community.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**

(2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.

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

(4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.

Note: We encourage applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation:

(1) WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/idocviewer/doc.aspx?docid=19&tocid=1>; and

(2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech_methods/.

In addition, we encourage applicants to participate in an optional Webinar hosted by the Institute of Education Sciences on March 6, 2015. This Webinar will discuss strategies for designing and executing well-designed Quasi-experimental Design Studies. Applicants interested in participating in this Webinar may find more information at the following Web site: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/event.aspx?sid=37>.

Strengths:

The proposal clearly describes the efforts of a randomized control trial through an independent evaluator to measure outcomes with both quantitative and qualitative data sets (e60) specific to the goals described for Power of Two. The proposal additionally included exemplars of the different data sets utilized as evidence. The approach provides a clear logic model that assesses at multiple stages to the methods to obtain data around the impact of specific programmatic elements of the study. This also allows for the leadership team to make adjustments to the project as necessary during implementation to address the community needs toward the goals associated with the project.

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses noted of the proposal for this section of evaluation.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness - CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost-Effectiveness)

This priority funds projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources (as defined in the notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

This priority was not directly addressed in the narrative.

Weaknesses:

This priority was not directly addressed in the narrative.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP3: Promoting STEM Education - CPP3: Promoting STEM Education

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

(Please only assign a score of either 0 or 2 for this question.)

This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:

(a) Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.

(b) Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on student growth (as defined in this notice).

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 3 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

This priority was not directly addressed in the narrative.

Weaknesses:

This priority was not directly addressed in the narrative.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP4: High-Need Students - CPP4: High-Need Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Supporting High-Need Students

This priority funds projects that are designed to improve:

- (a) Academic outcomes;
- (b) Learning environments; or
- (c) Both,

For one or more of the following groups of students:

- (i) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.
- (ii) Students with disabilities.
- (iii) English learners.
- (iv) Students in Lowest-performing Schools.
- (v) Students who are living in poverty and are served by schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty.
- (vi) Disconnected Youth or migrant youth.
- (vii) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 4 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants

may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The proposal clearly states how it will work with students from both English language-learner populations, as well as target students in schools with socio-economic needs around free and reduced-price lunch statistics.

Weaknesses:

Although the intent is clear, the specific data are not present to see how these populations are represented in the targeted state/school partners identified in this proposal. The proposal would benefit from the inclusion of more data around the inclusion of the high-needs populations articulated specific to this priority.

Reader's Score: 3

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grdes Reform (U367D150030)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	10	10
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design & Services	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	18
Adequacy of Resources		
1. Sustainability	15	14
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	20
Sub Total	100	97
Priority Questions		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness		
1. CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness	1	0
Sub Total	1	0
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
CPP3: Promoting STEM Education		
1. CPP3: Promoting STEM ED	2	0
Sub Total	2	0
CPP4: High-Need Students		
CPP4: High-Need Students		
1. CPP4: High-Need Students	4	3
Sub Total	4	3
Total	107	100

Technical Review Form

Panel #10 - 2015 SEED Peer Review - 10: 84.367D

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform (U367D150030)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The significance of the proposed project on a National Level.
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of teacher and school leadership theory, knowledge, and practices.
- (3) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.

Strengths:

The National Forum has a national reach with affiliates across the country demonstrating the project's ability to have a large impact (pg. 2). The applicant demonstrated their ability to carry out projects and reach students in need with their previous record of successful i3 projects (pg. 3-4). A strong case was made for the need for training teachers who focus on middle-grades (pg. 7). The proposed project can be learned and replicated in other middle-schools which contributes to the advancement of teacher knowledge and practice (pg. 7). The applicant details the relationship between English and mathematics achievement, and the importance of English knowledge as students progress through middle-grades (pg. 10). Identified areas that can take students off track for graduation were significant (pg. 11-12).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design and services of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design and services of the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, aligned, and measurable.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project will be of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project will prepare personnel for fields in which shortages have been demonstrated.
- (5) The extent to which the proposed project will focus on serving or otherwise addressing the needs of disadvantaged individuals.

Strengths:

The proposal has clear goals, objectives, and outcomes stated that are appropriate for the project (pg. 22-24). The project details efforts to improve teaching at the middle-grades level, an area often left out. The logic model outlines short-term

and long-term outcomes (pg. 20). The planned deliverables and trainings outlined appear to be sufficient in frequency and duration (pg. 26). The focus on middle-grades and not just elementary or secondary levels is addressing a shortage area in teacher preparation and professional development (pg. 30). The sample population will consist of students from high-poverty schools who performed poorly in key areas of English language arts and mathematics (pg. 31). The majority of the schools in the sample scored below 40 percent proficient in sixth grade English language arts and with several schools under five percent proficient (pg. 31). The interventions are planned for middle-grades, so student can enter high school better prepared (pg. 31).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project and of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and the project personnel, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, key project personnel, and project consultants or subcontractors.**
- (2) 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.**
- (3) The extent to which the proposed management plan includes sufficient and reasonable resources to effectively carry out the proposed project, including the project evaluation.**

Strengths:

The project director has experience serving as a Principal Investigator for two i3 grants and has strong experience with middle level education (pg. 32). Other key personnel appear to have the necessary background and education to carry out the project as planned (pg. 33-36). Key personnel have experience at the middle school level teaching, and providing educational service to at-risk students in English language arts (pg. 32-36). The management plan appears to have sufficient resources to carry out the evaluation (pg. 37).

Weaknesses:

Evidence of ways in which the Forum will keep the project on track was not clear (pg. 36). A timeline with milestones was not presented to provide an overview of the project activities with responsibilities aligning.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Adequacy of Resources

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources to continue the proposed project after the grant period ends. In determining the adequacy of resources and the potential for utility of the proposed project's activities and products by other organizations, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project is designed to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the period of Federal financial assistance.**
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to yield findings and products (such as information, materials, processes, or techniques) that may be used by other agencies and organizations.**
- (3) The extent to which the applicant will disseminate information about results and outcomes of the proposed project in ways that will enable others, including the public, to use the information or**

strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant has demonstrated providing continued services after funding ends and is likely to be able to do so with this project (pg. 38). The Forum plans to build capacity and share information about the program during the funding period (pg. 38). A tracer study will be conducted to track the knowledge exchange and use of the products developed (pg. 40). The tracer study will document the extent to which products from the proposed project are used by other agencies and organizations (pg. 40). The Forum will share and disseminate information and findings from this project at conferences, professional communities and associations, and professional conferences (pg. 41-42).

Weaknesses:

It was unclear whether or not all middle school teachers would be able to benefit and access materials (pg. 39).

Reader's Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers:

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.**
- (2) The extent to which the evaluation includes the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**
- (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.**

Note: We encourage applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation:
(1) WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/references/idocviewer/doc.aspx?docid=19&tocid=1>; and
(2) IES/NCEE Technical Methods papers: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/tech_methods/.

In addition, we encourage applicants to participate in an optional Webinar hosted by the Institute of Education Sciences on March 6, 2015. This Webinar will discuss strategies for designing and executing well-designed Quasi-experimental Design Studies. Applicants interested in participating in this Webinar may find more information at the following Web site: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/event.aspx?sid=37>.

Strengths:

The objectives of the evaluation were clearly stated and appropriate (pg. 43). Assessing program fidelity is especially important in order to be able to scale up the project nationally (pg. 43). A randomized control trial is planned which meets the What Works Clearinghouse Standards of evidence without reservation (pg. 43). Formative data will be used to inform and guide the intervention (pg. 43). Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and data collection techniques were provided with examples of each (pg. 44-46). The applicant shared specific ways in which student achievement would be measured which were appropriate (pg. 46). Student surveys will be used to measure students' self perception of learning and Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) will be used to measure student achievement growth for math and English (pg. 47).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 20

Priority Questions

CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness - CPP2: Cost-Effectiveness

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Improving Efficiency (Cost-Effectiveness)

This priority funds projects that will identify strategies for providing cost-effective, high-quality services at the State, regional, or local level by making better use of available resources. Such projects may include innovative and sustainable uses of technology, modification of school schedules and teacher compensation systems, use of Open Educational Resources (as defined in the notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

CPP3: Promoting STEM Education - CPP3: Promoting STEM Education

1. Competitive Preference Priority 3: Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education

(Please only assign a score of either 0 or 2 for this question.)

This priority funds projects that address one or both of the following priority areas:

(a) Increasing the opportunities for high-quality preparation of, or professional development for, teachers of STEM subjects.

(b) Increasing the number of individuals from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM, including minorities, individuals with disabilities, and women, who are teachers of STEM subjects and have increased opportunities for high-quality preparation or professional development.

In addition, applicants must describe how they plan to measure the impact the proposed project activities have on teacher effectiveness. Applicants must determine teacher effectiveness through a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation in which performance is differentiated using multiple measures of effectiveness and based in significant part on student growth (as defined in this notice).

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 3 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

CPP4: High-Need Students - CPP4: High-Need Students

1. Competitive Preference Priority 4: Supporting High-Need Students

This priority funds projects that are designed to improve:

- (a) Academic outcomes;**
- (b) Learning environments; or**
- (c) Both,**

For one or more of the following groups of students:

- (i) Students served by Rural Local Educational Agencies.**
- (ii) Students with disabilities.**
- (iii) English learners.**
- (iv) Students in Lowest-performing Schools.**
- (v) Students who are living in poverty and are served by schools with high concentrations of students living in poverty.**
- (vi) Disconnected Youth or migrant youth.**
- (vii) Students who are members of federally recognized Indian tribes.**

Note: The Department encourages applicants to provide a thoughtful, in-depth response to the priority area(s) under Competitive Preference Priority 4 to which they are well-suited to respond. Applicants may choose to respond to one or more of the priority areas and are not required to respond to each priority area in order to receive the maximum available points under this competitive preference priority.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to improve academic outcomes for students from low performing schools (pg. 10-11).

Weaknesses:

The applicant could articulate more on the ways in which the project will service groups of disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 3

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