Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: National Writing Project (S367D120015)
Reader #2: **********

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| **Selection Criteria**     |                 |               |
| **Significance**           |                 |               |
| 1. Significance            | 25              | 20            |
| **Quality of the Project Design and Services** |                 |               |
| 1. Project Design/Services | 30              | 25            |
| **Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel** |                 |               |
| 1. Management Plan/Personnel | 20              | 14            |
| **Sub Total**              | 75              | 59            |

| **Selection Criteria**     |                 |               |
| **Sustainability**         |                 |               |
| 1. Sustainability          | 25              | 22            |
| **Sub Total**              | 25              | 22            |

| **Priority Questions**     |                 |               |
| **Competitive Preference Priority** |             |               |
| **Improving Productivity** |                 |               |
| 1. Improving Productivity  | 3               | 2             |
| **Sub Total**              | 3               | 2             |

**Total** 103 83
Questions

Summery Statement - Summary Statement (Optional)

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

   General:
   This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

   Reader's Score: 0

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 national significance of the proposed project.

   (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the subject area in which the applicant would carry out project activities.

   (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 cites a key longitudinal study of student writing (3), the role of writing on the Common Core (4), and the emergence (and frequency) of digital literacies (4) as the exigence for the project design, and cites a number of nationally-known teachers of writing (5) and an established, widely-used digital community of practice as key levers to knowledge making (5). The focus on building leadership capacity alongside content area expertise (7) is an evidence-based practice for which the project designer has demonstrable evidence that it has sustained and contributed to teacher growth (7-8). Given the proposal's goal of sustaining and expanding the project designer's existing workstreams (16), the multitude of studies (8-15), conducted in a variety of settings and with varied student populations, demonstrating the impact of its services would suggest a high likelihood of achieving the same results with a new cohort of participants.

Weaknesses:

The proposal only tells of a potential contribution to the advancement of theory, knowledge, and practice of writing, but does not provide specifics as to what those advancements might be and how they will improve on existing knowledge, including the project designer's own. For instance, the proposal cites the "significant changes" (21) to result from implementing the CCSS, but offers little guidance, other than a brief reference of licensing an existing online PD module (25), on how it will innovate within its own programming to help teachers address the more rigorous analytical writing demands of the national standards. As such, while the project designers present plenty of evidence to support the impact of its programs on the stakeholders it works with, it's not clear what specific practices will or can be scaled up on a national level, or how the project designer intends to do so. While the project design is likely to sustain the organization's existing efforts, it is unclear what additional significance or national importance is gained from the proposal.
Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Services

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 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 are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

Strengths:

Two of the three goals of the project design are specific and measurable; indeed, they reflect the same goals the project designers have previously pursued and achieved, therefore building upon existing systems of recruitment (to meet the goal of recruiting 3000 teachers), professional development (20-22), and digital resources (24). The writing training to be provided is extensive (17), continuous, and aimed at the whole teacher (18), providing support for content-rich instruction (22), standards-based design (21), and building literate selves (18-19); accountability and growth measures are built into the model (18-19). The project design’s networked model, in particular the strength and autonomy of its local chapters, will provide both significant and differentiated support to participants over the course of the grant. The use of an existing digital social learning network (25) will likely contribute to continued and sustained professional learning over time, even after the grant period.

Weaknesses:

The project goals are largely defined by project designer inputs--for instance, “develop and pilot new professional development resources to improve the teaching of writing” (24)--without specifying outcomes beyond increases in the quantity of services provided or those serviced; furthermore, while it can be inferred the designer intends for project participants to experience a mix of grounded and online professional learning, there is no detail on how the new teacher-leaders involved as a result of the SEED grant will experience a system of integrated professional learning intentionally designed and scaffolded to reach targets. Though it can be assumed that this integration will be of local design, the lack of a clear model is a strange gap given that much of the project design is centered on leveraging existing resources.
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 designers have a highly-qualified leadership team (27-28), as well as the local support structures, which draw upon university staff and resources; the project evaluation contractors are among the most well-known and reputable measurement firms in the policy field. Given the existing structures in place at the organization, the timeline (30-31) appears feasible; given that the key personnel will maintain their roles and responsibilities if the SEED grant is won, it can be assumed they are already adequately committed time-wise to the work.

Weaknesses:
The proposal lacks detail on the objectives and milestones listed in the timeline; in fact, the timeline is the only detail provided in the management plan, and many of its descriptors are vague (e.g., “Review available plans” (30)). Though the personnel descriptions indicate roles and responsibilities, it is not made clear what new demands or responsibilities will be placed on existing personnel, nor who will own key objectives and milestones on the calendar.

Reader’s Score: 14

Selection Criteria - Sustainability
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 evaluation conducted as part of the project will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

Strengths:
The project designer has in place a number of mechanisms and information streams to share and disseminate its work, including websites (32) and digital media (33); it has also formed partnerships with key philanthropic and professional learning organizations (33-34) to help develop and spread work products. The program evaluation goals are more rigorous than the proposal goals themselves, including linking professional learning to student outcomes (38, 40) and with enacting the CCSS (33); the program evaluation design is well-structured and includes logical multiple measures.

Weaknesses:
While the proposal is likely to result in making many professional learning resources available—such as modules, examples of student and teacher practice, and ways for educators to connect and share practices—it’s not clear how the findings about the efficacy of its approaches will be disseminated to the public in the same ways as the digital resources will be. It seems likely that the most important information to come from such a project will be from the evaluation, not necessarily the work products produced from it, because the evaluation is so much more clearly articulated than the project design, which does not provide significant detail about potential content deliverables.
Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). 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 use of an online portal and network to disseminate professional learning resources, as well as tools for teachers to help build their own communities of practice, is likely to contribute more teacher-directed professional growth, as well as more efficient and cheaper ways of building capacity. The strong local university-school partnerships formed by the organization has the potential to provide high-needs schools with greater access to expertise and support at a less costly and resource-dependent rate than contracting with external partners.

Weaknesses:
The proposal itself does not speak to how the project design utilizes personnel and resources in an efficient manner, only to its impact on educational outcomes; it also does not offer any guidance as to how schools and other educational agencies will have the capacity to improve productivity on their own following the grant’s completion.

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 12/22/2011 12:18 PM
Technical Review Coversheet

### Applicant
National Writing Project (S367D120015)

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

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Selection Criteria - Significance

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   (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the subject area in which the applicant would carry out project activities.

   (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:

Data was used throughout the significance section to demonstrate that there is a significant need for this project at the national level, pages 3-15. Research was provided from 1981 and then again in 2003 and 2008 that showed that only 3% of class time involved student writing. This demonstrates that there is a significant need to teach students writing based on rigorous national and state writing standards, page 3. The teacher outcomes of this organization on past projects, pages 7, & 8, demonstrate that this project has the ability to implement a national project. The project will expand the current practices for teaching writing into writing in the digital age. In the projects plan writing will be taught using robust digital tools in environments where students already spend time writing for their own purposes, page 4. Teaching writing in rigorous and relevant ways for students should support the projects intended outcomes. The teachers will also receive professional development online, page 4. This should increase the knowledge and awareness of teachers to new digital resources and ways of teaching, in addition to providing them writing professional development. The National Writing Project has a 37 year history of sustaining the human capital to support innovation nationwide. It appears that this expertise will be essential in providing the resources needed to implement the projects intended practices, page 5. Professional development activities developed will also include writing across disciplines, page 5. Interdisciplinary curriculum and assisting students with making connections across content is critical for 21st century learning. This project proposes to provide resources and support for invited teacher leaders, page 7. Having teacher leaders in schools should assist in ensuring that new strategies for teaching writing are implemented by local teachers and should assist with the sustainability of the project beyond the grant funding. The National Writing Center already is developed at a national level and should be able to use the existing network of partners to offer professional development opportunities developed through this project, page 15. To increase the amount of time that teachers involve students in writing and motivate students to write, digital tools will be used. This project will support teachers and students in using digital media to write, page 4.
Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Services

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:

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   (3) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

Strengths:

The proposed project activities will expand on the ongoing work of the National Writing Center, page 15. This should assist with immediate implementation of the projects proposed activities with minimal delay time in ramping up for delivery. The projects goals are to increase teacher leaders in the improvement of student writing. The project's outcomes are focused on improving writing of high need students and developing online professional development modules around improvement of writing, page 16. By fall of 2012, 3,000 local teacher leaders will be trained and ready to support their local teachers, page 16. This should contribute to immediate improvements in the writing instruction of teachers in all 50 states and the writing outcomes of high need students. The preparation of strong teacher leaders and online professional development resources (page 17 & 21) are both critical in individualizing and customizing the professional development to meet the needs at the local level. This will also assist with sustainability because the teachers will have teacher leaders within buildings to support ongoing implementation and teachers will have access to online resources for just-in-time support. In addition to evaluating the projects outcomes for teachers, the project is also equally focused on measuring the outcomes for student around improved writing, page 20. This will allow the project to determine if the improvements in teacher practices are actually having an impact on their achievement in a meaningful way. The projects activities are outlined with specific details provided for every aspect of the proposal, with a focus on teacher and student outcomes, pages 15-26. The plan appears to be high quality, research based, and intense enough to lead to improvements.

Weaknesses:

No Weaknesses Noted

Reader's Score: 25
(3) 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:
This project will be managed by the senior leadership at the National Writing Project, page 27. This leadership team has relevant qualifications and experiences in the areas of professional development, teacher leadership, and writing to meet the objectives and outcomes of the proposed project. An independent evaluator will be hired to measure the project’s success in teacher and student outcomes, page 29. The proposed timelines, responsibilities, and milestones for accomplishing the project tasks are clearly described and appear both adequate and appropriate for the scope of the project, pages 30-31. The project to begin training teacher leaders in the fall of 2012; therefore, there is minimal start up time required before implementing project tasks.

Weaknesses:
The commitment of key personnel was limited; therefore, it was difficult to determine if it was appropriate enough in implementing and supporting the goals and objectives of this project, pages 27-29

Reader’s Score: 17

Selecton Criteria - Sustainability
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:

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   (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 evaluation conducted as part of the project will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

Strengths:
Partners are invested and have buy-in for the project and have committed to matching one-to-one the federal investment, page 31. The project outcomes will be made available in open access format and through a variety of ways (e.g., web-based deliver, webinars, web-based radio, podcasts, etc.), page 33. This differentiation will assist districts in customizing the resources to support and enhance their writing professional development and individualizing support for teachers. The evaluation plan is detailed and described ways in which student achievement will be measured and compared across states and sites, pages 36-46. It appears that all aspects of the project will be evaluated in order to determine effective strategies to replicate. The across state and site comparison should also assist with replication of the projects findings.

Weaknesses:
No Weaknesses Noted

Reader’s Score: 25

Priority Questions
Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). 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 preparation of strong teacher leaders and online professional development resources (page 17 & 21) are both critical in individualizing and customizing the professional development to meet the needs at the local level. This will also assist with productivity because the teachers will have teacher leaders within buildings to support ongoing implementation and teachers will have access to online resources for just-in-time support. The online modules develop with this project will become part of the NWP’s open-access online community of practices with a social learning infrastructure to provide just-in-time support for teachers in teaching writing, page 24. This project will develop 20 new online professional development modules that can be re-mixed with local offerings so that local districts can have high quality research based professional development that is ongoing and sustainable at any time, page 25. These open-source professional development resources will be combined with face-to-face opportunities though the training of teacher leaders, page 26. Again teacher leaders will be instrumental in sustaining the outcomes of this project.

Weaknesses:
No Weaknesses Noted

Reader’s Score: 3

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 12/22/2011 12:39 PM
## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** National Writing Project (S367D120015)  
**Reader #3:** **********

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Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - Panel - 1: 84.367D

Reader #3: **********
Applicant: National Writing Project (S367D120015)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement (Optional)

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

   General:
   This application was thoroughly discussed with respect to each selection criterion. My scores reflect my professional assessment of the application with respect to those criteria.

   Reader’s Score: 0

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 national significance of the proposed project.

   (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the subject area in which the applicant would carry out project activities.

   (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 applicant gives compelling information detailing the significance of this project on p. 13-15 and 15 where studies are included that show gains in student achievement in Greenville, SC; St. Louis County, MS; and Mississippi on p. . Data is also shared that shows that 44% of class time involves writing, yet, less than 3% of class time is involved in writing instruction. The project focuses on an area of needed professional development: teaching writing with digital tools. (p.3-4)

   The project focuses on developing teacher leaders in the field of writing instruction, a powerful component to assure outcomes will be met. Studies are cited on p. 7-8 indicating that teachers identify work with NWP as having an enduring impact on their work.

   The applicant is well-known for their work detailed across all 50 states and gave examples of their projects and networks that are established and focused on the process of writing. This project builds on past success while adding the digital literacy component to their work. Their projects typically involve high numbers of teachers, including 53,000 teachers in 2010, and they have the infrastructure to support such ambitious goals. (p.5-6)

   Weaknesses:
   No weaknesses seen.
Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Services

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:

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   (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 are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

Strengths:

This project sets goals and objectives to increase the number of teacher-leaders prepared to improve writing, increase professional development focused on students meeting standards, and develop and pilot new online professional development modules that have high success probability and have clear measures detailed.

The applicant has developed a project that will have a significant impact through the targeting of 3,000 teachers impacting 120,000 students during the 2012-2013 school year. The model develops teacher capacity to lead local initiatives and thus foster sustainability of the results. (p. 16-17)

The project continues its Summer Institute as part of this application. On p. 19, results of prior institutes show high numbers of teachers participating and subject areas and levels of schools are broadly covered with the participants enrolled. (p. 19) The institute operates with an annual peer review process to ensure quality design, intent and goals of the program. The institute requires participants to demonstrate successful approaches to teaching writing demonstrating there is an accountability factor in their proposed project where teachers are required to demonstrate a successful approach to teaching writing using multiple genres and sharing kinds of interventions they would use.

Development of 20 learning modules and access through a social learning infrastructure will create additional resources to support not only the teachers in the project, but teachers across the country who draw on the NWP free materials.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 30

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

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 or principal investigator, 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 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 proposal identifies highly qualified staff to lead the project. They have a proven record of success in previous writing initiatives as shown in the data provided and the curriculum vitae of the lead personnel. There is thorough detail about the qualifications of lead personnel for the project and the budget details the amount of time each manager will allocate to this project. The management plan is clear and delineates a thorough explanation and timeline of what and by when for the project. (p. 27-31)

Adequate staffing is shown to deliver the outcomes of this proposal. Their track record demonstrates an effective infrastructure to manage large numbers of sites and trainings.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Sustainability

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:

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   (3) The extent to which the evaluation conducted as part of the project will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

Strengths:
The applicant has developed a project with a high likelihood of sustainability. Through creating teacher-leaders able to develop and deliver training in effective writing instruction while simultaneously continuing to enhance their instructional strategies, the project is an example of a continuous improvement process destined for success.

The applicant provides information from the Legacy Study that demonstrates the sustainability of Writing Project teacher-leaders: 77% stay in the classroom and 97% remain in the field. With an average teaching career of 23 years, this project follows the path of some powerful results. (p. 31-32)

Use of the digital learning tools and online communities of learners with access to 20 learning modules will provide materials of use to other agencies and organizations. The applicant cites several partners on p. 34 that will support their efforts to expand access to new resources developed.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses seen.
Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. Projects that are designed to significantly increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources while improving student learning or other educational outcomes (i.e., outcome per unit of resource). 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 applicant uses the development of 20 online learning modules that can be accessed by teachers across the country as a strategy to increase efficiency. Investing time to develop modules that can be reused without additional cost will save in the use of time, staff and money.

Weaknesses:
No weaknesses seen.

Reader's Score:  3