## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Teach For America (S367D120030)

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

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Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Panel - 4: 84.367D

Reader #1: **********
Applicant: Teach For America (S367D120030)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement (Optional)

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:
The applicant presents a project that has a tested model. Clearly specified information is present on strategies to recruit participants for the project, and sustain the project beyond federal assistance. More emphasis on candidate preparation and its connection to student achievement would strengthen the project.

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:

(1) The applicant adequately presents information that demonstrates the national significance of the proposed project (pages 4-5). The project will provide a critical source of effective teachers and leaders in some of the highest-poverty regions in the country, thus creating a national pipeline of diverse, rigorously selected new teachers for students living in poverty in urban and rural communities across the country. Additionally, while many school districts and public charter schools access new teachers from local alternate routes, Teach For America remains the sole source for exceptional national prospects. The effective teachers and future educational leaders generated through this project will have national influence on educational practices and priorities.

(2) and (3) Implementation of the proposed project will likely result in information that will solidify current knowledge and practice using the proposed project model (pages 5-8). The applicant proposes to contribute to broader practices around teacher recruitment and development in the following by sharing knowledge with other organizations, schools, and school districts to advance understanding and develop best practices around teacher training and development; participating in third-party research that gives insight into successful practice; and developing more teachers who, informed by their Teach For America experience, will join our alumni network and become lifelong leaders impacting educational policy and practice. Results will also allow teacher education programs to determine the effectiveness of the model in terms of reforming teacher preparation programs at the various institutions across the country (pages 9-11).
Weaknesses:

(1) No weaknesses noted.

(2) No weaknesses noted.

(3) No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 25

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:

(1) Clearly specified and measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes are presented for the project (pages 12-13). The overall focus of the project is to recruit, support and retain teachers in high-need schools. Objectives, measures, and pertinent benchmark goals are clearly specified.

(2) and (3) The applicant demonstrates how the project is part of a comprehensive effort to reform teacher preparation programs. The applicant will provide a comprehensive approach to identifying, recruiting, and preparing highly effective teachers. The applicant will also ensure that corps members develop the knowledge, skills, and mind-sets needed to teach successfully in low-income schools by providing a training and professional development curriculum centered on experiential classroom learning; core instructional, classroom management, content, and pedagogical knowledge; robust performance support tools; and observations of excellent teaching (page 21). The main tenets of this approach include our Teaching As Leadership (TAL) framework and rubric; pre-service summer training; ongoing support and development from mentors, learning teams, and online resources; and an evaluation system for measuring teacher effectiveness and student growth. This is also demonstration of a comprehensive professional development program. (page 22). Teach For America will also support corps members throughout their two years in the classroom by providing each of them with a well-trained instructional coach (called a manager of teacher leadership development), access to high-quality online resources, and a local learning community (pages 22-23).
Weaknesses:

(1) The applicant does not present a clearly specified goal for the project. As written, units of measure that are aligned with each objective are stated as project goals. A clearly specified goal(s) for the project with units of measure as benchmarks to indicate accomplishment of objectives would strengthen the focus and intent of the project.

(2) A clear connection is not presented between participant development and the use of rigorous state standards in terms of increasing student achievement. (3) No weaknesses noted.

Reader’s Score: 26

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:

(1) The staff identified to work on the project have sufficient training and experience to lead the project. The project director has experience serving nonprofit institutions focused on K-12 education (page 30). Individuals designated as key project personnel and project consultants have sufficient training in the education field and previous experience administering the model. Qualifications and experience is also demonstrated through the resumes provided in the Appendix (pages 30-32).

(2) The management plan outlined for the project is sufficient to guide staff in efforts to oversee the project. Project tasks, responsibilities, and timelines are clearly specified for each year of the project (pages 34-37). Tasks are aligned with project goals.

(3) The time commitment of staff assigned to work on the project is specified by the applicant (Budget Narrative).
Weaknesses:

(1) No weaknesses noted.

(2) No weaknesses noted.

(3) The time commitment of identified staff assigned to work on the project is not presented in a clear manner to determine if time commitment if adequate. According to information presented in the Budget Narrative, staff assigned to the project will only commit between 19-36% effort toward the project (Budget Narrative). The reduced time commitments of staff may hinder the success of the project.

Reader’s Score: 17

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:

(1) The applicant specified that the generation and mobilization of funds to ensure long term results is its method of building capacity (pages 38-43). Teach For America has a track record of success in building organizational capacity to deliver results by mobilizing significant philanthropic and public support, and contends making investments in recruiting, and developing highly effective teachers and leaders who will have long-term impact on hundreds of thousands of students and the education sector. The applicant also states its diversified funding model and the impact that Teach For America has on project participants' beliefs and career paths will ensure long-term sustainability and results.

(2) A description is present on how the applicant will engage in data-driven knowledge development, external research projects, and internal studies, which will generate findings and ultimately products with value to other agencies and organizations (pages 40-43). For example, in executing the project, the applicant will collect and analyze significant amounts of data related to recruitment, selection, teacher training and development, and student outcomes. All of this data will enable us to continue to refine and deepen knowledge and understanding of how best to recruit, train, support, and develop highly effective teachers for students in poverty.

(3) The proposed evaluation outlined for the project will employ sufficient assessment tools to yield information on the effectiveness of project strategies to inform replication in other settings (pages 43-44). An internal
student achievement measurement system (SAMS) will be used to identify effective teachers in diverse contexts, noting trends in effectiveness within particular grade levels/subject matters as well as in specific regions. Additional assessment efforts will be developed to help gather data on overall progress against project objectives. Furthermore, by analyzing overall progress against the project objectives, the applicant will be able to identify and adopt best practices across our entire network. Data about what worked and what did not in each initiative will help us to uncover strategies for replication in the year ahead.

Weaknesses:

(1) The applicant states its diversified funding model and the impact that Teach for America has on project participants’ beliefs and career paths will ensure long-term sustainability and results. A detailed description of the diversified funding model would ensure its use as a tool to build capacity. Further, information on how the project will build capacity to ensure program participants will continue to provide high quality instruction is not presented.

(2) No weaknesses noted.

(3) No weaknesses noted.

Reader’s Score: 20

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:

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address Competitive Preference #2.

Reader’s Score: 0
### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Teach For America (S367D120030)

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

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Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement (Optional)

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

   General:

   Reader's Score:

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:

TFA plans to recruit, select, train and place 5800 new teachers in this proposed one-year project (abstract), and in so doing to create a “national pipeline of diverse, rigorously selected new teachers for students living in poverty” in urban and rural settings (abstract). The applicant projects "significant academic growth" for students of new TFA teachers. TFA proposes to deepen knowledge about effective strategies for recruitment, selection, training and development of highly effective (new) teachers, and support for 2nd and 3rd year TFA teachers (abstract). TFA teachers serve high need students (90% are students of color, 80% receive free/reduced lunch, and their students average at the 14th percentile on national measures (p. 3). TFA is an important source of highly qualified applicants for high poverty schools. TFA is the sole national source of new teachers not provided through local preparation programs. TFA engages in knowledge sharing with some LEAs and IHEs (pp. 6-7), and extensively in 3rd party research with interested researchers (pp. 7-8), and some members of its growing cadre of alums exert leadership and policy influence in education (p. 9). TFA teachers have an effect size on student learning of .26 compared with that of other novice teachers (p. 9), and other studies see similarly significant comparative effect sizes on student learning (pp. 9-10).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 25
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:
The proposal outlines clear TFA applicant selection criteria and process (pp. 2 and 17). TFA has established a competitive selection process and very effective recruitment -- 1st year TFA members had average college GPA of 3.6 and fully 99% had held a leadership position on campus (p. 2). Detailed, specific targets are provided for recruiting and selecting diverse applicants, placing teachers in high need schools (100%), retaining teachers through at least 1st two years, and percentages of highly effective and effective 1st and 2nd year teachers (p. 12). There is a clear design for recruitment (p. 14), data-driven prospecting (pp. 14-15), personal outreach campus campaigns, and strategic outreach to graduate students and young professionals (p. 15). The applicant proposes development of several new TFA strategies: marketing, replicating successful recruitment of diverse candidates (p. 15); and establishing new partnerships (p. 16). TFA proposes to strengthen TFA teacher retention through working with LEAs to identify and target support for struggling teachers. The proposal outlines a detailed professional development curriculum for TFA teachers (p. 21), using their Teaching as Leadership framework and rubric (pp. 21-22). The design also includes 2 years of sustained support including a well-trained instructional coach for every corps member, an array of online tools and resources (which they hope to enhance to become an online learning community support TFA teachers, and corps member meetings in teacher teams (pp. 23-24). Key aspects of the TFA model the applicant wishes to strengthen (pp. 27-28): developing visions of excellent teaching and learning, expanding real-time coaching pilots, and rolling out SAMS, the Student Achievement Measurement System.

Weaknesses:
The project seeks to create a national pipeline, but to this reviewer it appears that the applicant seeks to influence the existing teacher pipeline rather than create a distinctly new one. Also, it is unclear why the applicant seeks only one year of funding for a project that seeks to make longer term impacts.

Reader’s Score: 27

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 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:
TFA uses a very detailed and structured plan of project management and implementation with regard to recruitment, admissions, teacher training and support, and growth and district strategy (pp. 33-34) with detailed role responsibilities, evaluation metrics, and timelines (pp. 35-37). The project's key personnel possess significant expertise and deep familiarity with all aspects of the TFA model and this project.

Weaknesses:
None noted.

Reader's Score: 20

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:

   (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:
Project self-evaluation will rely on TFA's Student Achievement Measurement System (SAMS) to target support for teachers' ongoing program improvement (pp 24-25). TFA plans to move gradually toward setting "tailored benchmarks" for value added student growth by TFA educators (p. 25). The project will track number and percentage of effective and highly effective TFA teachers. TFA's funding is "extremely diversified" (p. 38). Sustainability will be enhanced through further diversification, deepening local funding bases and state support (p. 39)

Weaknesses:
There will not be a grant project-funded external evaluation, although Mathematica will do a robust national study of K-5 TFA teachers' effectiveness in raising student achievement relative to non-TFA teachers (p. 26)

Reader's Score: 23

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:
None noted.
Weaknesses:
The proposal did not address the potential to enhance educator productivity.

Reader’s Score: 0

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# Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Teach For America (S367D120030)  
**Reader #2:** **********

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| **Selection Criteria**                  |                 |               |
| **Significance**                        | 25              | 22            |
| 1. Significance                         |                 |               |
| **Quality of the Project Design and Services** | 30 | 29 |
| 1. Project Design/Services              |                 |               |
| **Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel** | 20 | 19 |
| 1. Management Plan/Personnel            |                 |               |
| **Sub Total**                           | 75              | 70            |

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

| **Priority Questions**                  |                 |               |
| **Competitive Preference Priority**     |                 |               |
| **Improving Productivity**              |                 |               |
| 1. Improving Productivity               | 3               | 0             |
| **Sub Total**                           | 3               | 0             |

**Total**                                | 103             | 92            |
Questions

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:
Teach for America is a very successful effort to improve teaching and learning in America's neediest schools. They have developed and refined a system of recruitment of high quality professionals over several years and with integrity documented their success.

This proposal also reflects the quality expected of corps members.

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:

To achieve national significance, a project should attempt to address a widespread and serious problem; contribute to our understanding by asking questions that build on sound, current research; and engaging in actions that are likely to produce a positive, measurable impact. Teach for America has a well established national presence and reputation for producing and placing highly effective teachers in the neediest of schools. This proposal, a one-year request for funding, intends to recruit, train, and place up to 5,800 in fall 2012 new Teach for America teachers. These new corps members will join the existing 9,000 corps members currently teaching in high poverty regions in 35 states increasing corps membership by more than 50%. Potential corps members representing all academic majors are recruited nationally from 1,500 colleges and universities. In so doing, Teach for America provides high quality teachers for the neediest schools.

Teach for America collaborates with third-party researchers to describe and document the recruitment and placement process; the support provided corps members during their two year teaching tenure, and the immediate impact of the program on student achievement. The results of this research are shared through journal reports, at the Teach for America website, and in Teach for America staff publications. (See footnotes) The result of their work is shared broadly adding to the body of knowledge and understanding of instructional effectiveness. (See also pg. 9-11)
Weaknesses:

Given the national impact of Teach for America for more than 20 years, the significance of the program should include more specific information regarding the retention of corps members in schools, as teachers and especially in the schools to which they were assigned. High poverty schools suffer not just from a lack of expertise but also from a lack of consistency in expectations, instructional approach, curriculum addressed, and simple interpersonal relationships which are important to children if they are to trust that their teachers are reasonable and intend to help them achieve.

Lastly, the reporting of magnitude on pg. 9 was confusing. The research is included to support the impact of Teacher Corps teachers on high poverty schools. It would be helpful to know the basis of the comparisons since these schools are notorious for having to hire minimally qualified teachers, provide little if any support for instruction, and experience high turnover often during the course of the academic year.

Reader’s Score: 22

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:

The design of this project is exemplary. This plan systematically addresses the recruitment, training, placement, and support of teachers for high poverty urban and rural settings throughout the United States. New teachers in challenging environments not only need a strong preparation but significant support. This Applicant clearly responds to the needs to these teachers with an extensive range of service and resources designed to make them effective teachers. The design also incorporates a good balance of ongoing evaluation, reflection, feedback and coaching and research that examines effectiveness of each step of the process/project.

The proposal includes both project goals and objectives that are measurable.

Weaknesses:

Although the design clearly describes the measures it will use to document effectiveness, it would be helpful to have some indication of baseline measures such as the existing level of diversity among the current corps and retention of corps members at initial placement schools in order to be able to judge effectiveness.

While the evaluation of potential corps members targets the soft skills associated with teaching, it also would be useful to include information regarding the content knowledge of applicants. Grade point average is a related indicator but particularly for mathematics and science placement it would be helpful to know/measure content knowledge.

Lastly, while Teach for America is justly proud of its success, but ultimately high poverty, and high need schools also need stability. Teachers and administrators who access the revolving door in school districts jeopardize whatever progress and improvement is made by individuals. Teach for America would do well to better track the movement of their teachers at the end of their two year commitment. Knowing that they stay
in education is hardly sufficient for such a high quality effort.

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 project's organizational structure and sequence of activities more than adequately address a systematic approach to project implementation. A general conceptual framework and timeline outlines the project and includes important milestones. Qualifications of key staff and time commitments are appropriate.

Weaknesses:
Two essential staff positions are currently not filled which may impact the aggressive timeline of this project.

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 program has a long and successful history of external funding along with a history of positive results, and an increasing interest on the part of college graduates. This project is designed to expand an existing successful program whose results are being replicated yearly throughout the country.
Although this is presented as a nine month project, clearly the Applicant has been building capacity beyond this Federal assistance for several years. Sustainability after this nine month’s project is unclear.

Reader’s Score: 22

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:
NA

Weaknesses:
While Teach for America has an impressive history of producing high quality teachers for schools, the proposal does not specifically address the issue of improving productivity. This proposal simply describes a project to continue the success of an existing pipeline

Reader’s Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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