

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/28/2010 7:05 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Reader #1:

	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS SCORED
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
Selection Criteria		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	25
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	20
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	4
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	7
Competitive Preference		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	0

Technical Review Form

Development 21: 84.396C

Reader #1:

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement

Selection Criteria

1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.

Strengths

<p>The AppleTree Institute and its partners propose to further develop the Every Child Ready (ECR) Program, a data-driven, evidence-based, RTI model for preschools that integrates special education children into the general education classroom. The proposal presents four overall goals: (1) all participating children arrive at kindergarten with the language, early literacy, early math, and social/emotional skills necessary for success; (2) all participating classrooms implement the ECR model with fidelity; (3)</p>
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children who participate in ECR demonstrate higher achievement than non-participating peers; and (4) ECS becomes a documented system of tools and practices (p. 1). The proposal presents the ECR model, its components (e.g., full-day program, teachers with bachelor degrees, universal screening, differentiated instruction) (pp. 4-5), and its five non-negotiable elements (pp. 7-8). The proposal describes the assessments that are used to identify children who score in the lowest quartile and who also display slower growth rates than their peers (pp. 8-9). Activities to Goals 1 and 4 (e.g., assessments coupled with professional development and classroom-based coaching for Goal 1) are depicted (pp. 9-11), and those associated with Goals 2 and 3 are described in the evaluation section (pp. 18-20).

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 25

2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)

In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.**
- (2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -**
 - (a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -**
 - (i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students described in such section; and**
 - (ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or**
 - (b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.**

Strengths

The proposal describes AppleTree as a 14-year old, nonprofit organization focused on increasing access to high quality preschool and prekindergarten. As an entity that supports charter schools, AppleTree Institute has experience raising funds for facilities and has provided technical assistance to other charter schools in the DC area (pp. 14-15). The organization shifted its mission 10 years ago to focus on improving the outcomes of the youngest learners, and began opening early learning charter schools in 2005. AppleTree has experience working with the named partners (e.g., Georgetown University evaluation team, DC Preparatory Academy) on similar initiatives.

The proposal describes evidence from a pilot project that involved 52 low income, mostly African American children over a two-year period. These children achieved increases in vocabulary growth: although they entered the pilot with reading assessments between the 20th and 28th national percentile, they exited scoring above the national norm (p. 4).

Weaknesses

It appears that AppleTree Institute has incrementally increased the number of its early learning charter schools over the past 5 years, going from 1, to 3, to 5 (pp. 15-16). Its ability to rapidly scale up and continue to achieve positive outcomes for its students is still untested.

Reader's Score: 20

3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)

In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.

(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.

(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed

project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.

(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.

(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths

The proposal states that the three charter schools that will participate will enroll 800 students, a modest number given the project budget, and the per-pupil per-year cost is estimated as \$1,375. This translates into per pupil per year costs of \$425 for 100,000 student (total of \$42.5M), \$337 for 250,000 (\$84.3M), and \$262 for 500,000 (\$131.2M). In terms of dissemination, the AppleTree Institute will work with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to disseminate the tools and outcomes, which will make the resources available to the District's preschool teachers. Other dissemination channels, such as multimedia professional development and online portals, will be developed by a local business consultant (p. 24).

Weaknesses

Since the project would be initially limited to a select group of three committed charter preschool partners (p. 6), it is unclear whether non-charter schools or those that do not have the resources to commit to the model would be able to adopt the approach or experience the outcomes associated with this initiative.

Reader's Score: 4

4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)

In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.

(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at

the end of the Development grant.

Strengths

The proposal includes an MOU from the key partners (DC Prep Academy, Early Childhood Academy), which describe the obligations, responsibilities, and expectations for participation. Also included are letters of support from the DC State Superintendent of Education, private foundations, and other community organizations. The proposal notes that early childhood education is a core concern in Washington, DC, which means that efforts to build on the project's success can continue forward. The tools and practices that the initiative documents will allow for other organizations to build on the outcomes. The proposal describes a commitment to provide matching funds, if the initiative is funded.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths

The management plan describes a three-phase implementation: planning (year 1), implementation (years 2 and 3), and follow up (years 4 and 5). The proposal describes in general terms the presence of an advisory board. A management plan describes benchmarks, indicators, and responsible parties for the major project activities in years 1-3 (pp. 28-28). Resumes are provided for each member of the management and evaluation team.

Weaknesses

There appear to be important gaps in the experience of the management team that, taken together, call into question whether the project can be

successfully implemented. The project director (Mr. McCarthy) holds only a bachelors degree and does not appear to have experience managing federal grants of a similar magnitude. Although the project manager (Ms. Lesiak) has experience within the US Department of Education coordinating the grant process, she also does not appear to have experience managing externally-funded initiatives of the scope and complexity in the current proposal. The lack of experience is important since these two key staff members would be responsible for making significant decisions about the partnership, resource allocation, negotiating and renegotiating decisions, and mid-course corrections.

Reader's Score: 7

Competitive Preference

1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);**
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and**
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.**

Strengths

The proposed project clearly targets the needs of preschool students and meets the criteria of the priority.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 1

2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success

(0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;**
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and**
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.**

Strengths

Priority not addressed.

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

Strengths

The proposed project intends to focus on the needs of children who are identified as in need of special education services.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 1

4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

Strengths

Priority not addressed.

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

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Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 06/29/2010 9:57 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Reader #2:

	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS SCORED
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
Selection Criteria		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	25
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	20
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	5
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	10
Competitive Preference		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	_____
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	_____

Technical Review Form

Development 21: 84.396C

Reader #2:

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement

Selection Criteria

1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.

Strengths

One of the strengths of the proposal is it is a data driven evidence-based Response-to-Intervention model targeted at Pre-school aged students. The Early Child Ready program has the support of community partners and a core group of stakeholders. Apple Tree did a 52-student pilot program for two a year period. The data showed that students who participated in the Apple Tree program out performed their peers in vocabulary development. Vocabulary development in primary grades is used as a strong predictor of

reading comprehension skills. The Every Child Ready Program has a Progress Monitoring System that gathers data on key academic areas like: Social/Emotional Development, Language, Phonological Awareness/Print Concepts, Alphabet Knowledge and Mathematics, teachers and coaches use the information to craft tier 1 or tier 2 plans using targeted evidenced-based activities.

Weaknesses

No weakness found

Reader's Score: 25

2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)

In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.**
- (2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -**
 - (a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -**
 - (i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students described in such section; and**
 - (ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or**
 - (b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.**

Strengths

As noted in the application, the applicant has 14 years of grant experience (Community Development Block Grant), and has community partners, Environmental Protections Agency and DC Department of Housing and Community Development. With these community partners, Apple Tree was able to provide technical assistance to several local charter schools totaling

1800 students.

Weaknesses

The applicant makes mention to the DCPEL to demonstrate its efforts to improve student outcomes, but the applicant does not provided any data to support student achievement outcomes, and the applicant doesn?t address high-quality teachers and principals.

Reader's Score: 20

3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)

In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.

(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.

(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.

(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.

(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths

In SY11 through SY13, the Every Child Read Program will reach close to

800 students. With a 14year history of private and public agency partnerships and support from the State Superintendent of Education to track achievement, disseminate tools and outcomes and provide technical assistance Apple Tree has the capacity to bring the project to scale.

Weaknesses

No weakness noted

Reader's Score: 5

4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)

In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.

(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at the end of the Development grant.

Strengths

Every Child Ready is a early learning professional development program that seeks to target instructional improvements in PreK. PNC Bank and the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation have agreed to provide 20% matching funds, because Apple Tree is a consulting agency, teachers union support is not appropriate, however, Apple Tree does have support from several federal government agency and the State Superintendent's Office.

Weaknesses

No weakness found

Reader's Score: 10

5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths

Applicant provided timeline and milestones broken down by benchmarks and indicators. The applicant has a strong Advisory Board that will oversee the implementation of the grant. A particular strength of the application is the development of professional development modules and ECR coaches. Instructional coaches that focus on early learn literacy development is a critical piece to the success of this program.

Weaknesses

No weakness noted

Reader's Score: 10

Competitive Preference

1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);**
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and**
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.**

Strengths

Applicant provided a quality response

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 1

2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

Strengths

Weaknesses

3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

Strengths

Applicant provided a quality response

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 1

4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Reader #3:

	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS SCORED
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	N/A	N/A
Selection Criteria		
1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)	25	23
2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)	25	25
3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)	5	4
4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)	10	10
5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)	10	10
Competitive Preference		
1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)	1	0
3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)	1	1
4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)	2	0

Technical Review Form

Development 21: 84.396C

Reader #3:

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396C100243)

Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement

Selection Criteria

1. A. Need for the Project and Quality of the Project Design (up to 25 Points)

In determining the need for the project and quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet (i.e., addresses a largely unmet need, particularly for high-need students, and is a practice, strategy, or program that has not already been widely adopted).

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project clearly specified and measurable and linked to the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet.

Strengths

This early childhood data-use innovation project uses a multi-year longitudinal design to address the persistent challenges of inadequate early childhood education among minority and poor students. Every Child Ready (ECR) is a promising data intensive RTI model that has shown promise in addressing early academic skills when implemented in public DC pre-schools. The ECR model is anchored firmly in five research-based practices associated with robust studies of early learning (pp. 4-5). The ECR

implementation model operates with five core, non-negotiable practices, which aid in fidelity and consistency of implementation across settings.

The project design is grounded in four clearly stated and comprehensive goals focused on the further development and refinement of the ECR innovation. (pp. 8-9). Additionally, preschool educators working at ECR sites commitment to 230 hours annually (nearly 40 days) to workshops, coaching, and administrator-led professional learning communities.

Currently, ECR uses a web-based data analysis and student progress monitoring system, but raising the level and extent of use of this tool in school and classroom level practice is identified as a key priority.

Weaknesses

The DC provides approximately \$12,000 per child annually for public preschool education programs, which may limit the ECR replication in other states or communities.

Reader's Score: 23

2. C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant (up to 25 Points)

In determining the experience of the eligible applicant, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The past performance of the eligible applicant in implementing projects of the size and scope proposed by the eligible applicant.**
- (2) The extent to which an eligible applicant provides information and data demonstrating that -**
 - (a) In the case of an eligible applicant that is an LEA, the LEA has -**
 - (i) Significantly closed the achievement gaps between groups of students described in section 1111(b)(2) of the ESEA, or significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students described in such section; and**
 - (ii) Made significant improvements in other areas, such as graduation rates or increased recruitment and placement of high-quality teachers and principals, as demonstrated with meaningful data; or**
 - (b) In the case of an eligible applicant that includes a nonprofit organization, the nonprofit organization has significantly improved student achievement, attainment, or retention through its record of work with an LEA or schools.**

Strengths

AppleTree (501c3) has a successful 14-year history as an incubator for secondary and now preschool charter or specialty schools. Close and comprehensive working relationships have been developed with a number of public, governmental, higher education, and private sector organizations to advance the quality of public schools in DC. Since 2000, the organization has been developing and operating preschools as partnership entities with clean audits for the past 14 years. A recently published independent ECR evaluation study reflects large and significant effect sizes on early language (.24) and math skills (.80) for children with and without disabilities at ages 3 and 4 (p. 13)

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 25

3. E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale (up to 5 Points)

In determining the quality of the strategy and capacity to further develop and bring to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) The number of students proposed to be reached by the proposed project, and the capacity of the eligible applicant and any other partners to reach the proposed number of students during the course of the grant period.

(2) The eligible applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to further develop and bring to scale the proposed practice, strategy, or program, or to work with others (including other partners) to ensure that the proposed practice, strategy, or program can be further developed and brought to scale, based on the findings of the proposed project.

(3) The feasibility of the proposed project to be replicated successfully, if positive results are obtained, in a variety of settings and with a variety of student populations. Evidence of this ability includes the availability of resources and expertise required for implementing the project with fidelity, and the proposed project's evidence of relative ease of use or user satisfaction.

(4) The eligible applicant's estimate of the cost of the proposed project, which includes the start-up and operating costs per student per year (including indirect costs) for reaching the total number of students proposed to be served by the project. The eligible applicant must include an estimate of the costs for the eligible applicant or others (including other partners) to reach 100,000, 250,000, and 500,000 students.

(5) The mechanisms the eligible applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths

800 preschool students will be served over two years at an average cost of \$1,375, which appears quite reasonable given the significant return on investment for early childhood interventions.

The staff is exceptionally well qualified in the areas of early childhood education innovations, professional development, and school leadership. An impressive set of consultants have committed to designing and implementing a robust ECR evaluation study.

Several local foundation partners have committed to providing the matching funds to advance the project.

Weaknesses

The expertise, qualifications, and role of Hartman Business Consulting organization in providing technology support and professional development for schools needs to be clarified, including the assurance of FERPA compliance associated with releasing pre-school student and family data to subcontractors.

Reader's Score: 4

4. F. Sustainability (up to 10 Points)

In determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that it has the resources, as well as the support from stakeholders (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions) to operate the project beyond the length of the Development grant.

(2) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the eligible applicant and any other partners at the end of the Development grant.

Strengths

Each of the three participating pre-schools provided comprehensive MOUs. (see appendix)

The partner organization letters confirm an impressive commitment to the 20% match. (p.25)

Ultimately, the project will substantially enhance the capacity of the ECR network to advance early learning on a wider scale and more cost-effectively.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

5. G. Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel (up to 10 Points)

In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers:

(1) 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.

(2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.

Strengths

Details regarding responsibilities, timelines, and benchmarks for accomplishing project tasks are provided for years 1-4.

The Apple Tree key personnel and the staff and consultants from the partner organizations are well qualified to lead the planning and implementation of pre-school innovations like ECR. They offer a wealth of experience in urban pre-school, community development, and research settings.

Equally important, these individuals worked together previously and successfully on several projects focused urban pre-school learning and development.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 10

Competitive Preference

1. Competitive Preference 5: Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (birth through 3rd grade) by enhancing the quality of early learning programs. To meet this priority, applications must focus on:

- (a) improving young children's school readiness (including social, emotional, and cognitive readiness) so that children are prepared for success in core academic subjects (as defined in section 9101(11) of the ESEA);
- (b) improving developmental milestones and standards and aligning them with appropriate outcome measures; and
- (c) improving alignment, collaboration, and transitions between early learning programs that serve children from birth to age three, in preschools, and in kindergarten through third grade.

Strengths

The proposed ECR innovation implementation and evaluation design addresses fully and effectively each of three assurances listed above.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

2. Competitive Preference 6: Innovations That Support College Access and Success (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to enable kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) students, particularly high school students, to successfully prepare for, enter, and graduate from a two- or four-year college. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs for K-12 students that

- (a) address students' preparedness and expectations related to college;
- (b) help students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes; and
- (c) provide support to students from peers and knowledgeable adults.

Strengths

Priority not addressed

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

3. Competitive Preference 7: Innovations To Address the Unique Learning Needs of Students With Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students (0 or 1 Point)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, including those who are assessed based on alternate academic achievement standards, or the linguistic and academic needs of limited English proficient students. To meet this priority, applications must provide for the implementation of particular practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve academic outcomes, close achievement gaps, and increase college- and career-readiness, including increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice), for students with disabilities or limited English proficient students.

Strengths

The applicant's plan for addressing CP 7 is excellent.

Weaknesses

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 1

4. Competitive Preference 8: Innovations That Serve Schools in Rural LEAs (0, 1, or 2 Points)

We give competitive preference to applications for projects that would implement innovative practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to focus on the unique challenges of high-need students in schools within a rural LEA (as defined in this notice) and address the particular challenges faced by students in these schools. To meet this priority, applications must include practices, strategies, or programs that are designed to improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, or improve teacher and principal effectiveness in one or more rural LEAs.

Strengths

Priority is not addressed

Weaknesses

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 06/28/2010 7:26 AM

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Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/21/2010 11:34 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396D100243)

Reader #1:

	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS SCORED
Evaluation Criteria		
1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)	10	7
2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)	15	10
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	25	17
TOTAL	25	17

Technical Review Form

Development Tier 2 Panel 08: 84.396D

Reader #1:

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396D100243)

1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)

The Secretary considers the strength of the existing research evidence, including reported practice, theoretical considerations, and the significance and magnitude of any effects reported in prior research, on whether the proposed project will improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout

rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. Eligible applicants may also demonstrate success through an intermediate variable that is strongly correlated with improving these outcomes, such as teacher or principal effectiveness.

In determining the strength of the existing research evidence, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that there are research-based findings or reasonable hypotheses that support the proposed project, including related research in education and other sectors.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has been attempted previously, albeit on a limited scale or in a limited setting, with promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.

(3) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that, if funded, the proposed project likely will have a positive impact, as measured by the importance or magnitude of the effect, on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

Strengths

1 STRENGTH OF RESEARCH-BASED FINDINGS OR REASONABLE HYPOTHESES

STRENGTHS

1. On pages 12 and 13 the applicant cites several studies that explain commonly known conditions that positively and negatively impact learning for entering kindergarten students.

2 PROPOSED PROJECT ATTEMPTED PREVIOUSLY WITH PROMISING RESULTS

STRENGTHS

1. On page 13 the applicant lists a study of the Every Child Ready model with significant and large effect sizes regarding language and math skills and did show increases in children with disabilities.

3 PROJECT LIKELY TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT AS MEASURED BY THE EFFECT, ON IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, CLOSING GAPS, DROPOUT RATES, GRADUATION RATES, COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS, COLLEGE GRADUATION.

STRENGTHS

1. On page 14 the applicant lists prior positive results from a previous study

as the potential for improving student achievement in kindergarten.

Weaknesses

1 STRENGTH OF RESEARCH-BASED FINDINGS OR REASONABLE HYPOTHESES

WEAKNESSES

1. On page 12 the applicant notes that there certain parent attributes affect the starting point for children entering kindergarten. The applicant then makes an assumption not based on any studies that the children become poor readers.
2. There are no studies cited regarding studies conducted for the Early Child Ready program that will be implemented. This is a substantial short coming and limits the ability to evaluate the impact this model will have.
3. On page 13 the applicant notes numerous studies that document the impact preschool has on children entering kindergarten. However, these studies do not address the effectiveness of the model proposed or any similar programs.

2 PROPOSED PROJECT ATTEMPTED PREVIOUSLY WITH PROMISING RESULTS

WEAKNESSES

1. There were no weaknesses noted.

3 PROJECT LIKELY TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT AS MEASURED BY THE EFFECT, ON IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, CLOSING GAPS, DROPOUT RATES, GRADUATION RATES, COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS, COLLEGE GRADUATION.

WEAKNESSES

1. There were no weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 7

2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)

In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors.

- (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the size and scope of the proposed project.**

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.

(4) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Strengths

1 METHODS OF EVALUATION ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE SIZE AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

STRENGTHS

1. On page 16 the applicant will utilize a randomized control trial and will utilize the students not selected in the lottery as the control group. This is a good technique to obtain valuable comparison data.
2. On page 16 the applicant notes that the control group will be given literacy related materials. This is a reasonable attempt to provide an appropriate comparison group.

2 METHODS OF EVALUATION WILL PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION DATA AND PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK, AND PERIODIC ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS

1. On pages 18, 19, and 20 the applicant lists a very comprehensive and thorough listing of nationally normed measurement techniques (Peabody Picture Vocabulary, etc.). The tests are sequenced to provide periodic assessment which is a important strength for high quality and timely feedback.

3 THE EVALUATION WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE KEY ELEMENTS AND APPROACH FOR REPLICATION OR TESTING

STRENGTHS

1. On page 21 the applicant notes that the evaluation will collect data and construct a profile and summary scores for classroom and

4 THE PROJECT INCLUDES SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR THE EVALUATION EFFECTIVELY

STRENGTHS

1. On page 22 the applicant indicates it has allocated personnel and resources

for the evaluation.

Weaknesses

1 METHODS OF EVALUATION ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE SIZE AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT WEAKNESSES

1. On page 18 the applicant notes that the control group will probably not enroll their children in a pre-school program. This format raises serious questions regarding a specific model given that logically any reasonable preschool program will show immediate results of having children entering kindergarten more ready in literature, reading, counting, etc. compared to children who had no preschool experience. Thus, there really is no randomization of a control group. This brings into serious question the design appropriateness.

2 METHODS OF EVALUATION WILL PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION DATA AND PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK, AND PERIODIC ASSESSMENT WEAKNESSES

1. There were no weaknesses noted.

3 THE EVALUATION WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE KEY ELEMENTS AND APPROACH FOR REPLICATION OR TESTING WEAKNESSES

1. On page 21 the applicant notes that treatment and comparison group will be analyzed utilizing ANOVAS and MANOVAS. This analysis will be of questionable usefulness given the comparison group did not attend any preschool. The results are more a statement on the value of preschool rather than the specific preschool model being proposed. It will have very limited research or statistical value. It will only prove the obvious.

4 THE PROJECT INCLUDES SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR THE EVALUATION EFFECTIVELY WEAKNESSES

1. In the Budget Narrative the applicant lists the evaluator as being compensated \$1.8 million over the length of the program. This amounts to 36% of the request to the funding agency. This seems way out of proportion to conduct an evaluation of several small preschool programs and greatly reduces funding that could have been better used to add more schools to the program.



Reader's Score: 10

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/21/2010 11:34 AM

[show names](#)

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Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/21/2010 10:32 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396D100243)

Reader #2:

	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS SCORED
Evaluation Criteria		
1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)	10	7
2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)	15	10
<i>SUB TOTAL</i>	25	17
TOTAL	25	17

Technical Review Form

Development Tier 2 Panel 08: 84.396D

Reader #2:

Applicant: AppleTree Institute for Education Innova -- , - , (U396D100243)

1. B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect (up to 10 Points)

The Secretary considers the strength of the existing research evidence, including reported practice, theoretical considerations, and the significance and magnitude of any effects reported in prior research, on whether the proposed project will improve student achievement or student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout

rates, increase high school graduation rates, or increase college enrollment and completion rates. Eligible applicants may also demonstrate success through an intermediate variable that is strongly correlated with improving these outcomes, such as teacher or principal effectiveness.

In determining the strength of the existing research evidence, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that there are research-based findings or reasonable hypotheses that support the proposed project, including related research in education and other sectors.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project has been attempted previously, albeit on a limited scale or in a limited setting, with promising results that suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.

(3) The extent to which the eligible applicant demonstrates that, if funded, the proposed project likely will have a positive impact, as measured by the importance or magnitude of the effect, on improving student achievement or student growth, closing achievement gaps, decreasing dropout rates, increasing high school graduation rates, or increasing college enrollment and completion rates.

Strengths

Strengths: The applicants cite several studies that support the effectiveness of quality pre-k education and its long term benefits (pgs 12-13).

The program was piloted in the proposed setting and independent evaluation results found significant effect sizes on relevant outcomes (pg 13). These promising results suggest that more formal and systematic study is warranted.

The independent evaluation found effect sizes ranging from 0.24 to 0.80 in language and math skills for 3 and 4 year olds, and for children with and without disabilities (pg 13).

Weaknesses

Weaknesses: Although there is evidence of the approach overall, the applicants did not cite research supporting their specific program design or components of their program (pgs 12-13). On page 13 the applicant makes a statement that children who start kindergarten farther behind others become poor readers and struggle with literacy and learning "throughout their often-abbreviated academic career." There is no literature cited to support this prediction.

Reader's Score: 7

2. D. Quality of the Project Evaluation (up to 15 Points)

In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors.

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation are appropriate to the size and scope of the proposed project.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.

(4) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Strengths

Strengths: The project proposes to use RCT and the setting will support such a model. This evaluation method is appropriate to the size and scope of this proposed project. The evaluators have a solid plan for recruitment and retention of the control group (incentives) (pg 16).

The evaluation plan includes several implementation measures to monitor fidelity and implementation process (Table D1; pgs 19-20). The plan includes mechanisms to share information with program staff and a set schedule for data collection. They will make data easily accessible by teachers and project teams (pg 21). They will also document the extent to which the proposed activities occur (pg. 22).

The table on pages 18 through 21 indicates that the evaluation has been designed to assess outcomes, and to document and measure the extent to which each of the program components is implemented.

The evaluation team has stellar credentials and an impressive amount of experience with both basic research and evaluations. In addition to being methodologically strong, they are also content experts which will strengthen their ability to interpret findings and make programmatic recommendations (appendix C CVs). A sufficient amount has been budgeted for the evaluation (p. 3 Budget Narrative).

Weaknesses

Weaknesses: Some of the children in the control group will attend preschool and some will not. It is possible that a sizeable portion will not attend any preschool, therefore, it is questionable as to whether changes detected suggest this program is effective, or whether attending preschool at all is what contributed to differences. The design would be stronger if the control group were attending some more traditional preschool program in order to determine whether this particular program is more effective than what is currently available (e.g., Head Start).

Reader's Score: 10

Status: Submitted**Last Updated:** 07/21/2010 10:32 AM