

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/21/2012 03:45 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	25
Significance		
1. Significance	35	33
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management and Personnel	20	16
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	74
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes		
1. CPP 6	1	0
Innovations that Support College Access & Success		
1. CPP 7	1	0
Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs		
1. CPP 8	1	0
Improving Productivity		
1. CPP 9	1	0
Technology		
1. CPP 10	1	1
Sub Total	5	1
Total	105	75

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - Full Development Panel - 12: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are (a) aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and (b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The eligible applicants 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.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(4) 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 applicant's overview of the proposed project says it addresses priorities 5 (Improving Achievement and Graduation Rates in Rural LEAs), 3 (Improving Family Engagement), 7 (College Access and Success) and 10 (Technology) (p. e19). The subsequent explanations of a project that takes two programs specifically intended to increase student achievement in math and facilitate student's enrollment in and success with Advanced Placement (AP) courses (p. e22) and melds them with outreach efforts designed for parents to help their children make well-informed decisions about going to college demonstrates that the project components and the approach are in close alignment with Priorities 5, 3 and 7.

The application indicates the proposed project will have four objectives (pp. e19; e23) and presents a logic model that provides a well-formulated snapshot of project activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts (p. e25). The application then offers a clear and detailed discussion of the project objectives, showing how the objectives align with and are linked to the priorities of the proposed project. Likewise the application clearly describes the strategies for meeting each objective, referencing literature that as a rationale of each strategy, and how each strategy is to be implemented (pp. e22-e28; e75-e76). These provide a clear picture of how the project will look at the operational level to meet its goals.

Two of the major instructional components and approaches for each strategy are detailed as well (pp. e22-e28; e88-e93) and the application explains how they were specifically selected to achieve the goals and expected results.

In this discussion the applicant profiles the project's lead organization, Virginia Advanced Study Strategies (VASS), indicating that it has experience managing and conducting an analogous project that will serve as the groundwork for the proposed project thereby increasing the likelihood of it meeting its objectives. (pp. e22-23). The application also lists 6 local educational agencies (LEAs) that will be partners in the project (pp. e6; e19) and includes letters of agreement from them that flesh out the details of project implementation by spelling out their commitments and identifying specifically what the lead agency will provide. Also included is list of participating schools and summaries of each LEA's student demographic data showing that they enroll significant percentages of at-risk students who are potential beneficiaries of the project (pp. e-56-e57; e77-

e86.)

The application provides a cost estimate of \$404 per student for a 4 year project implementation period noting that the project will serve an estimated 6591 high school and 8th grade students in this period. This estimate is further elaborated on pp. e56-e57 with expected per student participation rates by school. The application presents scale up cost estimates for up to 500,000 students that are much lower, partly because of economies of scale (pp. e28-e29). Given the scope of the project's implementation as well as the number of strategies and activities described, this is a reasonable estimate and a cost-efficient project. This is underscored by the emphasis on the potential for the project to boost student math achievement and college attendance, and also to enhance the rural communities' economic potential by generating a skilled workforce (p. e29). Finally, the applicant outlines strategies for integrating the proposed project into the on-going work of the partners thus showing the intention on the part of both VASS and the collaborating LEAs to make a long-range commitment to and investment in the project. The lead agency will integrate project strategies into its teacher training model -- which it also implements in other districts not in the collaborative -- and the LEAs will integrate project strategies into their school improvement plans (p. e29).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.

(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:

The applicant indicates that although the positive impact of establishing student support partnerships consisting of schools, families, and community organizations is well-documented generally, it is less so for rural communities. The application provides reference to supporting literature and also to rural education literature to underscore this point (pp.e31-e32). Establishing and studying such a partnership in a rural context is an exceptional approach because it applies a set of validated strategies for helping to improve student achievement and seeks to implement and validate them with a unique population, students from rural communities.

Moreover, the application indicates the absence of descriptions of or research about this project's effects in a rural context gives the proposed project -- and the results that come from it -- the potential to make a contribution to the field of rural education. The application provides a specific list of issues and questions, related to the project and its impact specifically on rural students' achievement, and the answers to which would be contributions to that field (pp. e31-e33).

The application cites the lead organization's experience with a similar project that showed gains in student achievement, especially among sub-groups that typically do not demonstrate high math achievement -- African Americans, females, and Hispanics -- as evidence that the proposed project has the potential for similar effects (pp.e30-e32). Other studies of the importance of and potential for support partnerships to

enhance rural students' achievement are referenced also in support of the contention that the project can lead to increases in achievement in math and among sub-groups typically demonstrating low math achievement (pp. e32-e33).

Weaknesses:

The application does not include enough detail about the project profiled as being highly effective to determine how similar it is to the one being proposed. There are no citations or references to publications that would provide this detail either. Therefore it is difficult to determine whether the profiled project and the proposed one are comparable enough -- for example, in terms of the number of students participating, their achievement levels prior to project implementation, the strategies and activities that constituted implementation, and so forth -- to extrapolate that the proposed project will have comparably impressive results (pp. e30-e32; e47-e53).

Reader's Score: 33

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

(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 application presents a chart showing the proposed project objectives, the major project milestone tasks -- including ones related to scalability and dissemination -- the parties responsible for the milestone tasks, by position, and milestone implementation dates expressed as quarters over the four-year grant period. The information presented in the chart is clear and shows that the applicant has an adequate plan for managing the proposed project and achieving the project objectives on time and within budget (pp.e36-e37). The chart itself is preceded by a narrative outlining the composition of the overall management team as well as an additional explanation of the applicant's approaches to dissemination to the field (pp. e33-e37).

The application provides a list of key staff -- including the project evaluator -- along with brief profiles of their background and experience (pp. e38-e39). Also included is a brief description of the qualifications for a key staff person as yet to be hired, math specialist. The brief profiles as well as the resumes of the key staff (pp. e97-e114) indicate all are qualified for the positions assigned to them.

Weaknesses:

The management plan chart lacks detail, especially as regards important project-critical sub-tasks. That is, the chart does not show activities that takes place within the major tasks such as the identification and recruitment of the highly important math specialist (p.34). The narrative that precedes the chart does not provide this detail either (pp. e33-e37). Also, the time frames presented as quarters, lack specificity -- especially since many of them (e.g., teacher training) need to be scheduled in sync with the school year (pp. e36-e37).

Reader's Score: 16

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Strengths:

n/a -- Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

n/a -- Scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

1. 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 applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations that Support College Access & Success

1. 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:

The application presents a logic model that shows how the proposed project will increase rural students' readiness for advanced classes that pave the way to college attendance (p. e25) and it also presents a set of project strategies for the establishment of family and community structures to support students as they take on these courses (pp. e27-e28).

Weaknesses:

The applicant, however, does not clearly describe exactly what is meant by VASS "providing" online resources for helping families understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes. That is, the application does not describe what activities, or tasks will be undertaken to provide the resources or promote and support their use. Also, there is no description of what the resources themselves are or how specifically they would help either families or students understand issues of college affordability and the financial aid and college application processes (p. 24).

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs

1. 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 did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. We give competitive preference to applications for 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 this notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Technology

1. We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

Strengths:

An important component of the applicant's proposed project is the use of technology to deliver instruction to students and to train teachers in its use (p. e23). The proposed project will also use technology as a tool for facilitating communication among partners (p. 33) as well as a way to help educate and inform the members of the proposed family support network about the program components and also regarding student achievement and progress (p.e28).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/21/2012 03:45 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/24/2012 05:08 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	25
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management and Personnel	20	18
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	78
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes		
1. CPP 6	1	0
Innovations that Support College Access & Success		
1. CPP 7	1	1
Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs		
1. CPP 8	1	0
Improving Productivity		
1. CPP 9	1	0
Technology		
1. CPP 10	1	1
Sub Total	5	2
Total	105	80

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - Full Development Panel - 12: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are (a) aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and (b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The eligible applicants 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.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(4) 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:

(1). The primary goal of this project is to develop a shared responsibility among teachers, parents/families, and the community to increase student success in the high school math program through use of the Khan Academy and other technology to expand student knowledge and parental interest and involvement. The process in this narrative is aligned with the project priorities and activities identified and will meet the objectives laid out in the application.

(2). The costs for this project will average \$404 per student which includes the private sector match and in-kind costs covered by this project. The applicant states that the scale-up costs for other districts that have the required technology available would be much less as the primary costs would then be teacher training, conducting math nights for families, and facilitating community STEM events. The costs for scale-up to 100, 250, and 500 thousand students would be less than the \$404 for this project.

(3). The costs identified for this project will insure the activities to be provided will be successful and show the cost-effectiveness and significance of the project for rural school districts, which have significantly increased technology equipment and accessibility for most rural school districts.

(4). At the end of the project period, the project implementation for math improvement will be an integral component of the curriculum and working relationship with parents/families and the community. The schools involved will incorporate this model into their school improvement plans, which identify community involvement as important areas of growth for these schools.

Weaknesses:

- (1). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.
- (2). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.
- (3). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.
- (4). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Significance**1. The Secretary considers the significance of the project. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (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). This model of shared responsibility for student learning is well-developed in the literature and research, but has not been implemented in as many rural communities as in metropolitan areas. This project will provide valuable information on how this model will work in a rural community because math education in smaller schools is often difficult due to the smaller numbers from which to draw students for advanced courses and also the lack of staff trained to teach these classes.

(2). The information gained from this project can have a significant impact on the staff training necessary in rural districts where the staffing is limited and teachers likely cover a variety of subjects. Sharing the responsibility for student learning with teachers, parents, and community is an important piece for student academic achievement and involvement of the entire community in the positive functioning of their schools. This information will also incorporate the understanding of the value and use of technology in the classroom and, specifically, the Khan Academy and other on-line math materials.

(3). The project can have a significant impact on the academic growth of students in these rural schools in math and other subject areas. The applicant has provided numerous research studies that show increases in math proficiency leads to increases in overall academic success, decreasing drop-out rates, increasing graduation rates, and supporting students to succeed in post-secondary programs. This project as developed will address and positively impact these effects.

Weaknesses:

- (1). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.

- (2). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.

- (3). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.**

- (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:

- (1). A comprehensive management plan is provided detailing by objective the activities, timeline, and person responsible for their achievement. The applicant proposes an advisory leadership team composed of thirteen persons from the schools, business community, higher education, students, and parents that will provide input to the operation of the project and support its development in the target community. This is a sound plan connecting all components of the program to ensure successful completion of the project goals. The strategies are sequential and build on the prior activities to be successful, and materials and on-line resources will continue to increase as the project grows.

- (2). A description of each of the identified staff members is provided including their management and leadership experience which relate to the objectives of the project activities and responsibilities.

Weaknesses:

- (1). The math specialist is an integral staff person in this project, and the applicant did not provide detail on how this person would be recruited.

- (2). No weaknesses are noted for this factor under the criterion.

Reader's Score: 18

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Strengths:

n/a- - Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

n/a- - Scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

1. 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 applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations that Support College Access & Success

1. 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:

The primary innovation is the focus on shared responsibility of the teachers, families, and community-based organizations to increase student success in math courses that will provide the academic ability to succeed in college. The research provided identifies the success of similar projects to components of this project. The resources provided to parents and families will increase their understanding of expectations in college and the financial aspects of post-secondary education.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs

1. 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 did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. We give competitive preference to applications for 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 this notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not identify this competitive preference priority for the purposes of earning competitive preference points.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Technology

1. We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

Strengths:

The major technology applications in this project focus on teacher roles in using the Khan Academy and TED-ED digital videos for student homework assignments and student viewing the on-line videos and completing on-line assessments with the support and assistance of parents/families. This is a targeted approach to math knowledge and use of a variety of resources.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/24/2012 05:08 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/20/2012 04:51 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	0
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management and Personnel	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	100	16
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes		
1. CPP 6	1	
Innovations that Support College Access & Success		
1. CPP 7	1	
Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs		
1. CPP 8	1	
Improving Productivity		
1. CPP 9	1	
Technology		
1. CPP 10	1	
Sub Total	5	
Total	105	16

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - Full Development Panel - 12: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are (a) aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and (b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The eligible applicants 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.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(4) 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:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Weaknesses:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.

(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:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Weaknesses:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

(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:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Weaknesses:

n/a Scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

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

Strengths:

This proposed project incorporates both an impact study utilizing a regression approach (p. 23) and an implementation study using a three dimension framework including adherence, quality of program delivery, and participant responsiveness (p. 21). This is an excellent framework as it appropriately captures key elements of project implementation, such as teacher attendance at project-provided professional development, use of technology, and students' perceptions of relevance and rigor (p. 22), in a theoretically

well-organized manner. The application discusses examples of the variables the evaluation will use to create the matched comparison sample for the impact study. These variables and this approach are appropriate given the design and proposed outcomes of the project as these will account for key demographical and prior achievement status. The application includes a table (p. 20) which matches the evaluation questions with the data strands that will be used to address them and this is a very useful organizing feature. The assignment of data sources to evaluation question seems reasonable, economical, and quite appropriate because multiple data sources are used to address each evaluation question and each data source is used to address multiple evaluation questions. Additionally data is gathered from different stakeholder groups (e.g., teachers, students, and parents) to address each evaluation question.

Another strength of this application is the incorporation of rapid Evaluation Briefs (p. 25) to provide formative feedback to project staff on short timeframes after collection of data. These likely will increase evaluation utilization by project staff and allow them to make modifications during the lifetime of the project. The external evaluator (SRI) identified in the application is a nationally-known firm that will provide the requisite independence, appropriate objectivity, and evaluation expertise for this evaluation which is important for carrying out the project evaluation effectively as it will likely provide confidence to project stakeholders for the evaluation work as well as any potential findings.

Weaknesses:

The application could be strengthened by providing additional details on the proposed data collection strands. For example, the application mentions that the external evaluator "will interview a sample of implementing teachers and conduct observations of the mathematics class" (p. 22), but it doesn't describe how many interviews or observations will be conducted nor does it describe how the teachers will be sampled to participate in the interviews or observations. This applies to the other data strands in the application as well, including the focus groups with a sample of parents (p. 22). Without this information it is difficult to assess the sufficiency of resources allocated to the evaluation activities as well as to determine the extent to which these data strands will provide sufficient information to provide high quality implementation data or facilitate replication of the project.

The evaluation proposes to "create indexes to measure the degree of quality" on several different dimensions of implementation fidelity, but it is unclear if all of these indices will be constructed at the school level, classroom level, or some combination. The methodology that will be employed to create the indices for the individual measures, especially in terms of how various factors are weighted in the indices, is also unclear as specifics are not provided in the application. Furthermore, it is unclear if these constructed indices will be utilized as independent variables or covariates in any of the impact study analyses, and if so, how, which makes it difficult to assess whether the analysis will be replicable in other settings.

Additionally, the application would benefit from refining the included logic model (p. 4) to show more specifically the hypothesized linkages between individual program activities outputs, and program outcomes, rather than one large block of each, and how the evaluation design will test these causal hypotheses, especially for the parent and community group components. This would help in the future consideration of possible replication of the project.

Finally, the proposed evaluation budget as discussed in the budget narrative section of the application is somewhat curious. Specifically, the indirect costs of \$207,332 on \$252, 668 in direct costs (over 80%) for the evaluation (p. 5 of the Budget Narrative) appears quite high.

Reader's Score: 16

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

- 1. 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:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations that Support College Access & Success

1. 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:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs

1. 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:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. We give competitive preference to applications for 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 this notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Technology

1. We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/20/2012 04:51 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/21/2012 03:37 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	0
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management and Personnel	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	100	16
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes		
1. CPP 6	1	0
Innovations that Support College Access & Success		
1. CPP 7	1	
Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs		
1. CPP 8	1	
Improving Productivity		
1. CPP 9	1	
Technology		
1. CPP 10	1	
Sub Total	5	0
Total	105	16

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - Full Development Panel - 12: 84.411C

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are (a) aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and (b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The eligible applicants 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.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(4) 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:

" n/a Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.

(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:

" n/a Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

(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:

" n/a Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

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

Strengths:

The key questions and proposed methods for addressing them are clearly spelled out for both the evaluation's implementation and impact components. The implementation evaluation will assess implementation fidelity, program delivery, and participant responsiveness (e42-e44). The impact study will separately assess collective roles of teachers, parents/families, and communities on students' mathematics enrollment and assessment outcomes.

The student outcomes that will be measured include: course grades, results on Virginia's State assessment of Standards of Learning (SOL) test. The achievement outcomes will be assessed by using student achievement data both to assess overall student achievement and to determine teachers' contribution to that achievement (e44).

The resources allocated to this project funds SRI senior staff with significant experience directing STEM and rural education programs to lead the highly qualified external evaluation team (e119). The evaluation is budgeted for 17 percent of the requested funds. The senior staff commits a level of effort between 4 and 7 percent; associate staff will participate for between 2 and 13 percent of their time (e119).

The evaluation team proposes to examine impact and outcome effects through a multi-method and multi-tiered qualitative and quantitative evaluation. This multi-tiered approach to data gathering has the potential of insuring optimal implementation understanding and to verify program impact. The research questions are explicitly defined (e40) and summarized (e40-41). The first three questions focus on implementation and the next four questions address the impact of the project in achieving high levels of mathematics achievement and in preparing postsecondary education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-related careers. The research questions, data collection plans, instruments/strategies are spelled out in a clear matrix (e41). The logic model connects inputs with intermediate and final outcomes (e25) and impact. Delineating this information in the evaluation plan increases the likelihood of a well-implemented and successful evaluation design.

The sampling strategy explains how the formative and summative data will be collected and links the data collection procedures explicitly with analytic strategies for assessing program impact on treatment students as compared with a matched control group. The design commits to matching students on the basis of multiple prior outcome indicators.

Data will be collected to address implementation fidelity along dimensions of adherence, program delivery quality, and participant responsiveness. The design anticipates a regression model and adjusts for prior outcome and demographic information. The sampling plan calls for 1600 students in the initiative and comparison schools for each math course, and assumes that baseline student achievement and student characteristics explains 50 percent of the achievement variance and predicts an effect size .07.

The project proposes to develop a series of rapid evaluation briefs which are a creative way to disseminate results and to make mid-course corrections throughout the project. Additional annual reports will provide more technical details to the management team. Year one reporting will focus on implementation trends and patterns; reporting in later years will describe project fidelity, achievement patterns, and will assess the effect on participation of the various supports, including families, teachers, and community members.

Impact analyses and reports will assess the model hypotheses, which suggest that strengthening the student support systems—the people around them—can benefit mathematics learning to assess if the project is feasible and worthy of replication in rural schools.

Weaknesses:

The evidence of impact is measured in the logic model with vague outcome statements. A tighter definition of project impact could be constructed by specifying targets on high-quality mathematics assessments and specific projections of expected behavioral changes as reported by surveys or observation of cooperating support systems in action. Additional details about the data collection instruments that would also strengthen the design. The Virginia State Assessment is the only instrument that is referenced specifically. Without more information about instrument validity, only a limited judgment can be made about the quality of the instruments for the planned data collection.

The application would benefit from additional detail about sampling features of each of the data collection strands (e38), e.g., the number of interviews that will be conducted, the sampling strategy, how participants in focus groups and interviews will be selected, etc.

Finally, the design will use indices to measure implementation quality but it wasn't clear how these indices will be constructed whether they will be defined on student-, school-, or classroom-levels, and how different factors will be weighted. If these indices are fruitful measures of implementation, perhaps they would also contribute to teasing out different dimensions of long-term impacts.

Reader's Score: 16

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

1. 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:

" n/a Scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations that Support College Access & Success

1. 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:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs

1. 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:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. We give competitive preference to applications for 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 this notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Technology

1. We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/21/2012 03:37 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/19/2012 07:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	25	25
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel		
1. Management and Personnel	20	17
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	0
Sub Total	100	77
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes		
1. CPP 6	1	
Innovations that Support College Access & Success		
1. CPP 7	1	1
Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs		
1. CPP 8	1	
Improving Productivity		
1. CPP 9	1	
Technology		
1. CPP 10	1	1
Sub Total	5	2
Total	105	79

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - Full Development Panel - 12: 84.411C

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, Inc. (U411C120091)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the project design, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project has a clear set of goals and an explicit strategy, with actions that are (a) aligned with the priorities the eligible applicant is seeking to meet, and (b) expected to result in achieving the goals, objectives, and outcomes of the proposed project.

(2) The eligible applicants 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.

(3) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

(4) 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 applicant presents a clear goal (to develop a sense of shared responsibility among families, teachers, and communities for student success, p e22) supported by four measurable objectives (p e23). The goal and objectives have been designed to complement one another, working together to achieve the program outcomes, rather than combining duplicative or disjointed strategies.

- Strategies to accomplish the objectives are clearly aligned with the priorities the applicant is proposing to meet (Absolute Priority 5, Competitive Preference Priority (CPP) 7, and CPP10). The logic model on page e25 succinctly presents the project strategy and links inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Pages e26-e27 elaborate on their strategies, with a practical approach described under each strategy for meeting priorities. This description, paired with the logic model, demonstrates a strong likelihood that the project strategies will address the priorities and intended outcomes.

- The process/strategy for addressing objectives 1 and 2 presented on page e27 is particularly well thought out. The activities are clear: gap analysis of core math competencies; comparison of those to Virginia and National standards; access Kahn Academy and TED-Ed (Technology, Entertainment, Design - Education) to supplement competencies as needed; develop a teacher guide; and train teachers regarding incorporating the content from the guide into classes and how to help parents reinforce its content. The strength in this approach lies in its practical plan for providing targeted services to students. The proposed approach will identify specific skills required for specific jobs/positions in high demand in the applicant's region, which will (1) provide students with a more tangible outcome than simply going to a class or even getting a degree; (2) maximize student learning time by developing focused education plans; and (3) address skills needed in the region, thereby impacting economic conditions.

- The applicant presents total project costs, the number of students served, cost per student and the scale-up estimates at 100K, 250K, and 500K (pp e28-e29). The estimates provided are practical; reductions in cost per student for scale up are reasonable given the large cost to develop the math advanced studies guide, which would only need to be done once per region, no matter the number of students to be served.

- The proposed project cost of \$404 per student (p e29) is very reasonable, given not only the potential impact of the project on student outcomes, but also the strong likelihood that the guide developed to address core math competencies will be replicable, scalable, and sustainable with minimal cost.

- As described above, the math advanced studies guide developed through this project will be a one-time cost, yet the guide can be used for several years into the future at no cost to the schools utilizing it. Further, the project dissemination/continuation plan on page e29 is reasonable given the use of free online resources (Kahn and TED-Ed) and distribution (at a minimal cost) of the math advanced studies guide (page e28). These efforts demonstrate the likelihood of the project activities to be incorporated into the ongoing work of the applicant and others.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Selection Criteria - Significance

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

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.

(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:

- The applicant presents a project plan on pages e22-e28 which is exceptional in meeting the priorities of the competition. Specifically, the applicant proposes a method for providing targeted math and science education to students in rural areas. In addition to being targeted, the approach provides families and students with an understanding of the practical importance of mathematics and science in the workplace. The project approach focuses on the support roles of teachers, families, and community organizations in increasing student success, which is a well-rounded approach to accelerating learning and preparing students for post secondary success.

- The project plan is further supported by a discussion on page e30 where the applicant highlights how their experience with operating a similar model for four years in 73 schools contributed to building the project approach. Additionally, the approach builds on the work of a National Science Foundation-funded project, the Rural Systemic Initiative, which focused on rural mathematics education. The proposed project 's strategies are strengthened by building upon lessons learned from these projects, eliminating some of the trial and error that otherwise would have taken place.

- The applicant specifically identifies gaps in knowledge in the field and the how they will address these gaps. The project will inform the Education community on how a shared experience between families, teachers, and communities in a rural context can have positive effects on student achievement (page e31). The applicant focuses the study on how rural context affects student achievement, thereby informing the field regarding why, for example, rural students are less academically prepared for math or science courses, or why rural students end their math studies sooner than their non-rural counterparts.

- Page e32 shows that two initial cohorts of students showed positive academic gains. For example, Cohort 1 schools achieved 143% increase in math, science, and English ACT (American College Test) qualifying scores

over 2 years. Their non-cohort counterparts achieved 97%. Also, Zelkowski (2008, p e32) found that secondary mathematics intensity level significantly increased the odds of Bachelor degree completion. Each of these indicates a strong potential impact on student achievement and college success.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 35

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan and Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the management plan and personnel for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(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, as well as tasks related to the sustainability and scalability of the proposed project.

(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 presented on pages e36-e37 shows major tasks by objective, with responsibilities and timelines. The tasks are supportive of each objective and are feasible for achieving proposed outcomes. For example, Objective 2 (engaging family members) is accomplished through (1) providing teachers with resources to help them work with parents; (2) planning family math nights; (3) conducting family math nights; (3) providing parents with technological tools to work with students; and (4) providing parents with information to help them actively participate in their child's education. By describing the step by step activities that lead to accomplishing this objective, along with a timeline for when the activities will take place, the application provides a clear, practical plan for achieving each objective.

- The management plan includes tasks specific to sustainability and scalability (page e37), including integrating the model into the schools' improvement plans, conducting webinars, soliciting partners, and holding special conferences. This demonstrates a clear plan for distributing information to others (improves the potential for replication or scale up at their sites) and for incorporating activities into their ongoing work (via partner solicitation and through the use of the math advanced studies guide).

- Qualification of key staff are relevant and appropriate to their respective duties in that they reflect education and experience which would contribute to the success of the project. For example, the Co-Director, who will be responsible for leading parent/community involvement activities, previously served for three years as the Director of Parent/Community Engagement in the Appalachian Rural Systemic Initiative (page e39 and Appendix F).

Weaknesses:

- The management plan includes a math specialist in the proposed project, but provides limited detail regarding the mechanism for hiring this individual. The management plan (page e36) indicates that the applicant will hire staff for this position in the first quarter, with no specificity as to when in the first quarter they anticipate having this position hired, nor do they discuss how they plan to fill such a position in a rural setting in a tight time frame. A discussion of this and how they would mitigate delays caused by an inability to hire quickly would strengthen the management plan.

Reader's Score: 17

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

General:

N/A - Scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

1. 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:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations that Support College Access & Success

1. 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:

- The applicant describes a process which allows teachers to provide *targeted* math instruction, designed to specifically prepare students for technology-related college courses and careers (page e27).
- The applicant intends to incorporate career planning, selecting a college, completing a college application, and reviewing financial aid information into the project via online resources (page e24).
- The application includes intense participation from parents, community members, and teachers, thereby providing students will support from knowledgeable adults. Additionally, because students will be selected from small, rural schools, it is very likely that they will participate in these courses together, creating a peer support system among the students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 1

Competitive Preference Priority - Innovations to Address the Unique Learning Needs

1. 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:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Improving Productivity

1. We give competitive preference to applications for 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 this notice), or other strategies.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Reader's Score:

Competitive Preference Priority - Technology

- 1. We give competitive preference to applications for projects that are designed to improve student achievement or teacher effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools or materials, which may include preparing teachers to use the technology to improve instruction, as well as developing, implementing, or evaluating digital tools or materials.**

Strengths:

- The applicant proposed a strategy which would allow teachers to utilize Kahn Academy and TED-Ed digital videos (Appendix J attachment 2) in a *targeted* manner to maximize teacher effectiveness (described on page e37). The application presents a plan where these tools are used strategically to address math and science deficiencies in terms of being successful in college and finding a job. Teachers will receive targeted training and an implementation guide that will help them address these deficiencies efficiently.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: **1**

Status: Submitted
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