

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/12/2014 02:32 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	25	24
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel	25	22
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
1. Cost-Effectiveness/Produc	1	0
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
1. Enable Broad Ad of Eff Pr	2	2
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
1. Early Learning	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>68</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - 2014 Validation Grant Review - 3: 84.411B

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

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project addresses the national need and priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.
- (2) The likelihood that the project will have the estimated impact, including the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that unmet demand for the proposed project or the proposed services will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.
- (3) The feasibility of national expansion if favorable outcomes are achieved.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address the unmet needs within the context of the absolute priority. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address unmet demands and enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the applicant will ensure future scaling should the proposed project have positive results.

#### Strengths:

1. Applicant clearly states how the Project will work toward meeting the needs of students, especially high-risk students (all LEAs in Project are Title 1), to improve academic performance through "650 additional annual hours of standards-aligned academic enrichment" (p.e21)
2. Project has already been evaluated and has been determined, "Highly Effective Without Reservations according to the What Works Clearinghouse"(p.e21)
3. Applicant provides evidence that the proposed Project is likely to have desired impact and states a current waiting list of 200+ students in the existing LEAs it works with thus proving an unmet demand (p.e22)
4. Applicant provides clear documentation of its ability to scale (p.e24-25) with potential for national expansion.

#### Weaknesses:

None

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

- (1) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of the project goals and whether the application includes a description of project activities that constitute a complete plan for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks to project success and strategies to mitigate those risks.
- (2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that

prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to develop a clear set of goals as well as the applicant's plan for achieving those goals. In designing this plan, applicants should consider the risks that could prevent success and what strategies they will implement to counteract those risks to ensure the proposed project is implemented successfully and will achieve its goals. Further, applicants are encouraged to identify barriers to scaling the proposed project and address how they will overcome the identified barriers.

**Strengths:**

1. Applicant clearly states its goals (p.e29) and its planned strategies to achieve these goals (pp. 30-31).
2. Applicant clearly identifies risks to success and has spelled out mitigation strategies to lessen the likelihood of these risks (p. e31)
3. Applicant clearly identifies previous barriers to scaling its program and states how the grant would rectify its perceived barriers to scaling (p.e32)

**Weaknesses:**

1. Applicant does not show evidence that there is a need to develop a proprietary web-based training platform with so many excellent platforms available. Vague (p.e32)

**Reader's Score: 24**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

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

(1) The extent to which the management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones for completion of major project activities, the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, and annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

(2) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional (as defined in the Validation Notice Inviting Applications) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex projects.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate both the successes and challenges of the project and use the lessons from their ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project to improve the project. Applicants also are encouraged to explain the organization's plan to operate the project at a national level or regional level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to think about how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex projects, such as an i3 Validation grant.

**Strengths:**

1. Management Plan identifies key responsibilities, has well-defined objectives, and includes timeline and annual performance targets (pp. e32-37)
2. Budget is detailed, although has many questionable items (see Weaknesses below)
3. Project Director and two others are identified.
4. Project Director appears to have adequate experience to successfully manage the Project.

**Weaknesses:**

1. Although overall milestones are identified, specific activities are not clearly defined.
2. Applicant proposes more than [REDACTED] for staff salaries in the first year alone(p.e223), which includes three new national management positions for Higher Achievement who are not directly involved exclusively in this Project (p. e206)
3. Construction costs are usually not eligible for e3 funding (\$270, 000 to renovate and expand HA's national offices in DC( p. e206).
4. Funding to develop a training platform and MIS system is questionable as there are many platforms available. Training for new platforms and maintenance and tech support budgets are not included. (p.e206)
5. Year 2 proposed funding for rent increases (\$72,000) is almost twice the amount allotted that year for curricula adjustments (\$37,500) (pp. e208-209).

**Reader's Score:** 22

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

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

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measureable threshold for acceptable implementation.

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

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The applicant should address whether the methods for evaluation would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and how the evaluation design will ensure the project will be evaluated at the proposed level of scale. The response to this criterion should include a description of the proposed sample size and the estimated project impacts as well as the key components of the proposed project for implementation. Finally, applicants should also address whether sufficient resources, which may include the qualifications of the independent evaluator, are included in the project budget to carry out the evaluation effectively.

**Strengths:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer.

**Weaknesses:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer.

**Reader's Score: 0**

**Priority Questions**

**CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity - CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity**

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that address one of the following areas:

- (a) Substantially improving student outcomes without commensurately increasing per-student costs.
- (b) Maintaining student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.
- (c) Substantially improving student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.

**Other requirements related to Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

**An application addressing this priority must provide--**

- (1) A clear and coherent budget that identifies expected student outcomes before and after the practice, the cost per student for the practice, and a clear calculation of the cost per student served;
- (2) A compelling discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with alternative practices;
- (3) A clear delineation of one-time costs versus ongoing costs and a plan for sustaining the project, particularly ongoing costs, after the expiration of i3 funding;
- (4) Identification of specific activities designed to increase substantially the cost-effectiveness of the practice, such as re-designing costly components of the practice (while maintaining efficacy) or testing multiple versions of the practice in order to identify the most cost-effective approach; and
- (5) A project evaluation that addresses the cost-effectiveness of the proposed practice.

**Strengths:**

- 1. Applicant states that it will disseminate the tools developed during the grant to 30x more students than are directly impacted reducing the cost per student from \$3,903 to \$410. (e18)
- 2. Applicant delineates one-time costs (\$4.8 million) versus on-going costs(e17).

**Weaknesses:**

- 1. Although Applicant does show decrease in per student cost over the 5 years of the Project, \$4,688 per-student cost instead of \$6,500 per student per year for a supplemental program cannot be considered cost-effective.(e17).
- 2. Applicant does not provide evidence that just the dissemination of the tools will result in similar student results.
- 3. Applicant does not identify specific activities designed to increase cost effectiveness, other than identifying new revenue streams, "school payments (\$40,000 per site) and corporate sponsorship (\$75,000 per site)"(e17), both of which cannot be guaranteed. Unless the school is extremely well funded, getting a school to commit \$40,000. per year to a supplemental program is unlikely.

Reader's Score: 0

**CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi**

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that enable broad adoption of effective practices. An application proposing to address this priority must, as part of its application:

(a) Identify the practice or practices that the application proposes to prepare for broad adoption, including formalizing the practice (i.e., establish and define key elements of the practice), codifying (i.e., develop a guide or tools to support the dissemination of information on key elements of the practice), and explaining why there is a need for formalization and codification.

(b) Evaluate different forms of the practice to identify the critical components of the practice that are crucial to its success and sustainability, including the adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners.

(c) Provide a coherent and comprehensive plan for developing materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that other entities would need in order to implement the practice effectively and with fidelity.

(d) Commit to assessing the replicability and adaptability of the practice by supporting the implementation of the practice in a variety of locations during the project period using the materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that were developed for the i3-supported practice.

**Strengths:**

1. Applicant states it will share its standards-aligned curriculum and robust training program for broad adaptation (e. 18) and "will analyze implementation costs and improve efficiency".

2. Applicant states it will "refine lessons, training materials, and instructional practices ...to meet the needs of schools, nonprofits, and diverse learners," (e18).

**Weaknesses:**

1. Applicant states that, "requests for curriculum will be met only if paired with training support from HA (online and in person) and use of a How-To Guide to adapt to diverse learners" (e18). By requiring payments to HA for even online training, the cost of the project dissemination may be too cost-prohibitive for others.

Reader's Score: 2

**IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning - IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning**

1. The Secretary encourages applicants to propose projects that improve the coordination and alignment between early learning and development systems and elementary education systems in order to improve transitions for children from birth through third grade.

**General:**

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/12/2014 02:32 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/12/2014 01:20 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	25	25
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel	25	25
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
1. Cost-Effectiveness/Produc	1	1
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
1. Enable Broad Ad of Eff Pr	2	2
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
1. Early Learning	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>73</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - 2014 Validation Grant Review - 3: 84.411B

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

(1) The extent to which the proposed project addresses the national need and priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The likelihood that the project will have the estimated impact, including the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that unmet demand for the proposed project or the proposed services will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.

(3) The feasibility of national expansion if favorable outcomes are achieved.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address the unmet needs within the context of the absolute priority. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address unmet demands and enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the applicant will ensure future scaling should the proposed project have positive results.

#### Strengths:

1) The applicant makes a strong case for the regional and national project. The students identified to be served are generally low-income students and many of the students are African American and Latino. The curriculum is well-suited to aid teachers and schools in assisting high need students to excel academically, particularly in math and other core subjects.

2) The project has been independently evaluated and was found to be significant in raising students' math and reading scores. The project has also met the What Works Clearinghouse's highest standards. The success and the fact that over 90% of students completing the program advance to top high schools and over 90% graduate from high school on time make for a clear case that the applicant will be able to reach the proposed level of scale.

3) The applicant is well-positioned to expand from its current status. The applicant's plan to expand including neighboring school districts near Washington DC. If favorable results are achieved with the schools and sites proposed, the applicant is confident in launching additional sites on a national level.

#### Weaknesses:

1) No weaknesses

2) No weaknesses

3) No weaknesses

Reader's Score: 20

## Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

(1) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of the project goals and whether the application includes a description of project activities that constitute a complete plan for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks to project success and strategies to mitigate those risks.

(2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to develop a clear set of goals as well as the applicant's plan for achieving those goals. In designing this plan, applicants should consider the risks that could prevent success and what strategies they will implement to counteract those risks to ensure the proposed project is implemented successfully and will achieve its goals. Further, applicants are encouraged to identify barriers to scaling the proposed project and address how they will overcome the identified barriers.

### Strengths:

1) The applicant clearly define the project goals and objectives including a description of the activities. For example, to increase the number of students served, the applicant proposes to expand to nine additional sites. The services are clearly designed to achieve math and common core standards proficiency for middle school students. The applicant presents a logical set of risks in implementing the plan and a clear description of how the applicant will respond and mitigate any barriers. For example, due to the intense networking and relationship building the project has with school officials, any changes in leadership at the schools should not affect the buy-in the project has garnered.

2) The plan to utilize grant funds to expand the project nationally including the availability of the project's curriculum is reasonable and logical. Web-based training would allow more schools and educators to learn about the curriculum for implementation.

### Weaknesses:

1) No weaknesses

2) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score:** 25

## Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

(1) The extent to which the management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones for completion of major project activities, the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, and annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

(2) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional (as defined in the Validation Notice Inviting Applications) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex projects.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate both the successes and challenges of the project and use the lessons from their

ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project to improve the project. Applicants also are encouraged to explain the organization's plan to operate the project at a national level or regional level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to think about how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex projects, such as an i3 Validation grant.

**Strengths:**

1) The applicant has a clear and coherent management plan with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each staff member as well as partners (schools and corporations). The timeline includes annual and end-of-project milestones and each goal includes objectives with identified metrics. For example, the goal to increase student achievement includes metrics such as grades, test scores, and attendance records.

2) The applicant is refining its plans for expansion and is clear in its description of leveraging regional partnerships through its existing operating and financial model. The sources of revenue including corporate sponsorship and school payments as well as philanthropic activities ensure sustainability during the project period.

3) The director has held the executive director position with Higher Achievement since 2007. He has held various positions of importance with the organization achieving impressive results. For example, under his leadership, student growth and cost efficiency has increased (11% and 14% respectively).

**Weaknesses:**

1) No weaknesses

2) No weaknesses

3) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score:** 25

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

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

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measureable threshold for acceptable implementation.

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

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The applicant should address whether the methods for evaluation would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and how the evaluation design will ensure the project will be evaluated at the proposed level of scale. The response to this criterion should include a description of the proposed sample size and the estimated project impacts as well as the key components of the proposed project for implementation. Finally, applicants should also address whether sufficient resources, which may include the qualifications of the independent evaluator, are included in the project budget to carry out the evaluation effectively.

**Strengths:**

N/A scored another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A scored by another reviewer

**Reader's Score:**      **0**

**Priority Questions**

**CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity - CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity**

**1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that address one of the following areas:**

- (a) Substantially improving student outcomes without commensurately increasing per-student costs.**
- (b) Maintaining student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.**
- (c) Substantially improving student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.**

**Other requirements related to Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

**An application addressing this priority must provide--**

- (1) A clear and coherent budget that identifies expected student outcomes before and after the practice, the cost per student for the practice, and a clear calculation of the cost per student served;**
- (2) A compelling discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with alternative practices;**
- (3) A clear delineation of one-time costs versus ongoing costs and a plan for sustaining the project, particularly ongoing costs, after the expiration of i3 funding;**
- (4) Identification of specific activities designed to increase substantially the cost-effectiveness of the practice, such as re-designing costly components of the practice (while maintaining efficacy) or testing multiple versions of the practice in order to identify the most cost-effective approach; and**
- (5) A project evaluation that addresses the cost-effectiveness of the proposed practice.**

**Strengths:**

- 1) The budget is clear and coherently addresses before and after results. As the number of students increase, the cost per student decreases after the first year (\$6,500 in year one, compared to \$4,688 in year five).
- 2) In comparison to a charter school's cost, Higher Achievement costs are 75% less and Higher Achievement results are comparable to that of a charter school.

- 3) One-time costs are appropriately 60% of the budget in year one. After the first year, the costs are considerable reduced, further making a strong case for sustainability.
- 4) Using web-based curriculum, partnerships (i.e., AmeriCorps) and fund raising are cost saving strategies identified by the applicant. These activities are estimated to reduce annual costs by \$100,000 and are clear.
- 5) The applicant plan to outsource the evaluation of its implementation to an independent consultant. The results of this evaluation of costs will further promote project cost effectiveness.

**Weaknesses:**

- 1) No weaknesses
- 2) No weaknesses
- 3) No weaknesses
- 4) No weaknesses
- 5) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score:** 1

**CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi**

**1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that enable broad adoption of effective practices. An application proposing to address this priority must, as part of its application:**

- (a) Identify the practice or practices that the application proposes to prepare for broad adoption, including formalizing the practice (i.e., establish and define key elements of the practice), codifying (i.e., develop a guide or tools to support the dissemination of information on key elements of the practice), and explaining why there is a need for formalization and codification.**
- (b) Evaluate different forms of the practice to identify the critical components of the practice that are crucial to its success and sustainability, including the adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners.**
- (c) Provide a coherent and comprehensive plan for developing materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that other entities would need in order to implement the practice effectively and with fidelity.**
- (d) Commit to assessing the replicability and adaptability of the practice by supporting the implementation of the practice in a variety of locations during the project period using the materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that were developed for the i3-supported practice.**

**Strengths:**

- a) The curriculum is planned for broad adoption and is clear. The applicant's plan to refine and adjust the curriculum and to provide guide books and training on the curriculum for adaptation is a good strategy.
- b) The applicant has proposed a logical plan including evaluation measures that assess the implementation process for various groups, including diverse learners. Training will be relied upon in concert with implementation assessments to ensure a successful plan.
- c) The plan to develop training and other toolkits for other entities is sound. The applicant will modify materials dependent

on the type of environment in which materials are used. In addition, presentations at conferences and other web-based training will ensure successful implementation with regard to effectiveness and fidelity.

d) It is evident that the applicant is committed to assessing the adaptability and replication of its curriculum (practice) due to the components of the curriculum such as metacognition, critical thinking, speaking and writing. The practice is estimated to benefit over 20,000 students.

**Weaknesses:**

- a) No weaknesses
- b) No weaknesses
- c) No weaknesses
- d) No weaknesses

**Reader's Score: 2**

**IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning - IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning**

- 1. The Secretary encourages applicants to propose projects that improve the coordination and alignment between early learning and development systems and elementary education systems in order to improve transitions for children from birth through third grade.**

**General:**

N/A

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/12/2014 01:20 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/08/2014 04:38 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

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

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	20
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	25	24
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel	25	24
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
1. Cost-Effectiveness/Produc	1	1
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
1. Enable Broad Ad of Eff Pr	2	2
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
1. Early Learning	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>71</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - 2014 Validation Grant Review - 3: 84.411B

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

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project addresses the national need and priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.
- (2) The likelihood that the project will have the estimated impact, including the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that unmet demand for the proposed project or the proposed services will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.
- (3) The feasibility of national expansion if favorable outcomes are achieved.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address the unmet needs within the context of the absolute priority. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address unmet demands and enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the applicant will ensure future scaling should the proposed project have positive results.

#### Strengths:

Applicant clearly establishes a national need for programs that deliver rich, Common Core-aligned content in an effective, engaging manner, especially for students who chronically underperform. There is very strong alignment with Absolute Priority 2. The program has already been determined to be "Highly Effective Without Reservations" by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse and offers 650 annual hours of standards-aligned academic enrichment to high-need middle school students. (pages e20-22) Applicant makes a convincing case that its program expansion is likely to provide statistically significant impacts on math and reading. (pages e22-23) The program is built to scale and has an impressive track record of student impacts and sustaining growth. It has developed a strong infrastructure and the ability to grow with high-quality program fidelity. (pages e23-25)

#### Weaknesses:

None.

Reader's Score: 20

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

- (1) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of the project goals and whether the application includes a description of project activities that constitute a complete plan for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks to project success and strategies to mitigate those risks.
- (2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to develop a clear set of goals as well as the applicant s plan for achieving those goals. In designing this plan, applicants should consider the risks that could prevent success and what strategies they will implement to counteract those risks to ensure the proposed project is implemented successfully and will achieve its goals. Further, applicants are encouraged to identify barriers to scaling the proposed project and address how they will overcome the identified barriers.

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides a clear, complete, and coherent discussion of the project goals and project activities, including its organization approach, its curriculum and instruction, and organization culture. Three key goals are identified, and annual metrics for increasing students achievement and engagement towards internationally benchmarked, college and career ready standards are included, along with strategies to achieve the goals. (pages e25-31) Applicant anticipates three implementation risks and discusses associated mitigation strategies, as well as previous barriers to scaling. (pages e31-32)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not address whether and how it will modify its program for the participating districts in Virginia, which use Virginia's Standards of Learning, not the Common Core. Program alignment may not be as strong with the school curriculum in those districts.

**Reader's Score:** 24

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan**

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

**(1) The extent to which the management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones for completion of major project activities, the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, and annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.**

**(2) The clarity and coherence of the applicant s multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional (as defined in the Validation Notice Inviting Applications) during the project period.**

**(3) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex projects.**

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate both the successes and challenges of the project and use the lessons from their ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project to improve the project. Applicants also are encouraged to explain the organization s plan to operate the project at a national level or regional level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to think about how the project director s past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex projects, such as an i3 Validation grant.

**Strengths:**

The management plan identifies very clearly the proposed roles to be played by the project director and various teams involved in implementing the project, and their corresponding responsibilities. (pages e17-18) Applicant identifies specific, well-defined objectives and provides appropriate, yet aggressive annual targets. (pages e34-36) A detailed timeline and milestones are included for major project activities. (pages e36-37) Applicants addresses its multi-year financial and operating model, including key positions to be added over the course of the project and its three long-term sustainability goals. A randomized controlled trial study will be conducted to evaluate the program and its impacts, paving the way for

potential national expansion. (pages e38-39) The project leader has seven years of experience with the organization, overseeing program management delivery and evaluation across four states and 14 sites, and is well qualified to lead this project. (pages e40-41)

**Weaknesses:**

The project budget includes \$270,000 for expansion of its national headquarters and renovation of its DC Metro building, which may not be allowable. Some of the budget items seem high or not well supported by the narrative (\$300,000 for new computers at offices and centers, \$165,000 for a proprietary training platform when there may be a number on the market that might be adaptable to the applicant's needs). (pages e206-207)

**Reader's Score: 24**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation**

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

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

(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.

(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measureable threshold for acceptable implementation.

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

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The applicant should address whether the methods for evaluation would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and how the evaluation design will ensure the project will be evaluated at the proposed level of scale. The response to this criterion should include a description of the proposed sample size and the estimated project impacts as well as the key components of the proposed project for implementation. Finally, applicants should also address whether sufficient resources, which may include the qualifications of the independent evaluator, are included in the project budget to carry out the evaluation effectively.

**Strengths:**

N/A scored by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

### Priority Questions

#### CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity - CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that address one of the following areas:
  - (a) Substantially improving student outcomes without commensurately increasing per-student costs.
  - (b) Maintaining student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.
  - (c) Substantially improving student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.

Other requirements related to Competitive Preference Priority 1:

An application addressing this priority must provide--

- (1) A clear and coherent budget that identifies expected student outcomes before and after the practice, the cost per student for the practice, and a clear calculation of the cost per student served;
- (2) A compelling discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with alternative practices;
- (3) A clear delineation of one-time costs versus ongoing costs and a plan for sustaining the project, particularly ongoing costs, after the expiration of i3 funding;
- (4) Identification of specific activities designed to increase substantially the cost-effectiveness of the practice, such as re-designing costly components of the practice (while maintaining efficacy) or testing multiple versions of the practice in order to identify the most cost-effective approach; and
- (5) A project evaluation that addresses the cost-effectiveness of the proposed practice.

#### Strengths:

Applicant asserts that it will reduce the cost per student by 28% while ensuring at least 60 percent of students achieve Advanced/Proficient scores or increases their test scores by 2020. Two new revenues are discussed, school payments and corporate scholarships. This revenue model is already being piloted effectively. (pages e17-18) The cost per student for the direct full program and the cost per student for indirect dissemination strategy are provided, along with a clear and coherent budget. (pages e-17-18) Specific activities are identified to improve the cost-effectiveness of the project. The project evaluation will address cost-effectiveness.

#### Weaknesses:

By the end of Year 5 of the grant, the full organization budget will still cost \$4,688 per student. This may be a sizable reduction in cost/students directly served over 2014, but it is a very high amount to spend on an after-school program. (page e17)

Reader's Score: 1

#### CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that enable broad adoption of effective practices. An application proposing to address this priority must, as part of its application:
  - (a) Identify the practice or practices that the application proposes to prepare for broad adoption,

including formalizing the practice (i.e., establish and define key elements of the practice), codifying (i.e., develop a guide or tools to support the dissemination of information on key elements of the practice), and explaining why there is a need for formalization and codification.

(b) Evaluate different forms of the practice to identify the critical components of the practice that are crucial to its success and sustainability, including the adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners.

(c) Provide a coherent and comprehensive plan for developing materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that other entities would need in order to implement the practice effectively and with fidelity.

(d) Commit to assessing the replicability and adaptability of the practice by supporting the implementation of the practice in a variety of locations during the project period using the materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that were developed for the i3-supported practice.

**Strengths:**

Applicant clearly identifies the practices for broad adoption, including a brief description of how it will refine lessons, training materials, and instructional practices to meet the needs of schools, nonprofits, and diverse learners. (pages e18-19) Throughout the application, the applicant identifies the critical components of the project and how it will adapt them to different teaching and learning environments. Applicant commits to dissemination of the tools it is creating and refining, with a goal of impacting 30 times more students (20,000). (page e18)

**Weaknesses:**

A potential weakness is that, to ensure fidelity, requests for curriculum from other districts will only be met if paired with training support from the applicant (in-person or online). (page e18) This seems to imply that the applicant intends to charge others who may want to use its tools. If so, this could diminish the likelihood of broad dissemination.

**Reader's Score:** 2

**IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning - IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning**

1. The Secretary encourages applicants to propose projects that improve the coordination and alignment between early learning and development systems and elementary education systems in order to improve transitions for children from birth through third grade.

**General:**

Applicant did not address this priority.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/08/2014 04:38 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2014 02:09 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

**Reader #4:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	0
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	25	0
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel	25	0
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	30	28
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
1. Cost-Effectiveness/Produc	1	0
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
1. Enable Broad Ad of Eff Pr	2	0
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
1. Early Learning	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>28</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - 2014 Validation Grant Review - 3: 84.411B

Reader #4: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project addresses the national need and priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.
- (2) The likelihood that the project will have the estimated impact, including the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that unmet demand for the proposed project or the proposed services will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.
- (3) The feasibility of national expansion if favorable outcomes are achieved.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address the unmet needs within the context of the absolute priority. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address unmet demands and enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the applicant will ensure future scaling should the proposed project have positive results.

#### Strengths:

N/A scored by another reviewer.

#### Weaknesses:

N/A scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

- (1) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of the project goals and whether the application includes a description of project activities that constitute a complete plan for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks to project success and strategies to mitigate those risks.
- (2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to develop a clear set of goals as well as the applicant's plan for achieving those goals. In designing this plan, applicants should consider the risks that could prevent success and what strategies they will implement to counteract those risks to ensure the proposed project is implemented successfully and will achieve its goals. Further, applicants are encouraged to identify barriers to scaling the proposed project and address how they will overcome the identified barriers.

**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**

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

(1) The extent to which the management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones for completion of major project activities, the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, and annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

(2) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional (as defined in the Validation Notice Inviting Applications) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex projects.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate both the successes and challenges of the project and use the lessons from their ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project to improve the project. Applicants also are encouraged to explain the organization's plan to operate the project at a national level or regional level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to think about how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex projects, such as an i3 Validation grant.

**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**

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

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

**(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups.**

**(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.**

**(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measureable threshold for acceptable implementation.**

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

**Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The applicant should address whether the methods for evaluation would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and how the evaluation design will ensure the project will be evaluated at the proposed level of scale. The response to this criterion should include a description of the proposed sample size and the estimated project impacts as well as the key components of the proposed project for implementation. Finally, applicants should also address whether sufficient resources, which may include the qualifications of the independent evaluator, are included in the project budget to carry out the evaluation effectively.**

**Strengths:**

The project proposes two experimental evaluation studies that include random assignment of students to treatment condition (p. 26). Because of the ability of this design to control for major threats to internal and external validity, if implemented faithfully it can provide evidence of effectiveness that will meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations. The third-party evaluator is well qualified to implement this evaluation design. To help to ensure that the design is implemented faithfully, the evaluator will have sole responsibility for the random assignment process (p. 28).

The proposal provides four evaluation questions (p. 27) that can guide the conduct of the project evaluation. To reduce concerns about the impact of multiple hypothesis testing the proposal specifies a small number of confirmatory evaluation questions (p. 28). For the middle school study the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure will provide further adjustment for the impact of the multiple hypotheses (two).

In addition to the main, overall analyses, the studies will examine the differential impacts for a variety of subgroups (pp. 29-30). The studies will also examine the effect that various implementation variations have upon the outcomes; e.g., program maturity, degree of implementation (p. 30). These analyses will deepen the understanding of the project's impact.

The sample students will be enrolled at existing sites as well as new host schools (p. 31). This will facilitate the analyses of the effect of program maturity that is noted above.

A power analysis indicates that the proposed sample size for the main confirmatory hypothesis is sufficient to detect a minimum effect size difference of 0.11 (p. 32). This is an appropriate effect size target based upon prior research on the impact of the project.

The evaluation study design includes plans to assess program implementation in three areas (pp. 33-34) which is an important factor in a solid evaluation study. Without such information if the outcomes do not show a positive treatment effect, it is not possible to determine whether or not that lack of expected results is because of an ineffective innovation or due to the innovation not being implemented as it was designed.

At approximately 13.6% (p. e146) of the total project costs, the evaluation budget appears adequate to support the comprehensive evaluation study that is proposed for the project.

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal indicates that state assessments in mathematics and reading will be used as the outcome measures in the middle school study (p. 26). Project participants will be enrolled in schools in at least four different states. The proposal did not discuss how the results of different state assessments will be combined to produce an overall measure of impact.

Longitudinal implementation surveys and instructional logs are to be used to obtain data for the implementation study (p. 33). No information was provided about how the contractor will determine the reliability and validity of the instruments.

**Reader's Score:**      28

**Priority Questions**

**CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity - CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity**

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that address one of the following areas:

- (a) Substantially improving student outcomes without commensurately increasing per-student costs.
- (b) Maintaining student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.
- (c) Substantially improving student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.

Other requirements related to Competitive Preference Priority 1:

An application addressing this priority must provide--

- (1) A clear and coherent budget that identifies expected student outcomes before and after the practice, the cost per student for the practice, and a clear calculation of the cost per student served;
- (2) A compelling discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with alternative practices;
- (3) A clear delineation of one-time costs versus ongoing costs and a plan for sustaining the project, particularly ongoing costs, after the expiration of i3 funding;
- (4) Identification of specific activities designed to increase substantially the cost-effectiveness of the practice, such as re-designing costly components of the practice (while maintaining efficacy) or testing multiple versions of the practice in order to identify the most cost-effective approach; and
- (5) A project evaluation that addresses the cost-effectiveness of the proposed practice.

**Strengths:**

N/A scored by another reviewer.

**Weaknesses:**

N/A scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

**CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi**

1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that enable broad adoption of effective practices. An application proposing to address this priority must, as part of its application:

(a) Identify the practice or practices that the application proposes to prepare for broad adoption, including formalizing the practice (i.e., establish and define key elements of the practice), codifying (i.e., develop a guide or tools to support the dissemination of information on key elements of the practice), and explaining why there is a need for formalization and codification.

(b) Evaluate different forms of the practice to identify the critical components of the practice that are crucial to its success and sustainability, including the adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners.

(c) Provide a coherent and comprehensive plan for developing materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that other entities would need in order to implement the practice effectively and with fidelity.

(d) Commit to assessing the replicability and adaptability of the practice by supporting the implementation of the practice in a variety of locations during the project period using the materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that were developed for the i3-supported practice.

**Strengths:**

N/A scored by another reviewer.

**Weaknesses:**

N/A scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

**IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning - IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning**

1. The Secretary encourages applicants to propose projects that improve the coordination and alignment between early learning and development systems and elementary education systems in order to improve transitions for children from birth through third grade.

**General:**

N/A scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

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**Status:** Submitted  
**Last Updated:** 08/04/2014 02:09 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/06/2014 02:07 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

Reader #5: \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	20	0
<b>Quality of Project Design</b>		
1. Project Design	25	0
<b>Quality of the Management Plan</b>		
1. Management/Personnel	25	0
<b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b>		
1. Project Evaluation	30	26
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
<b>CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity</b>		
1. Cost-Effectiveness/Produc	1	0
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
<b>CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi</b>		
1. Enable Broad Ad of Eff Pr	2	0
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
<b>IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning</b>		
1. Early Learning	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>26</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #3 - 2014 Validation Grant Review - 3: 84.411B

Reader #5: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Higher Achievement Program, Inc. (U411B140013)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

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

- (1) The extent to which the proposed project addresses the national need and priorities the applicant is seeking to meet.
- (2) The likelihood that the project will have the estimated impact, including the extent to which the applicant demonstrates that unmet demand for the proposed project or the proposed services will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.
- (3) The feasibility of national expansion if favorable outcomes are achieved.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address the unmet needs within the context of the absolute priority. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address unmet demands and enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the applicant will ensure future scaling should the proposed project have positive results.

#### Strengths:

N/A Scored by another reviewer

#### Weaknesses:

N/A Scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

### Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

- (1) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of the project goals and whether the application includes a description of project activities that constitute a complete plan for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks to project success and strategies to mitigate those risks.
- (2) The extent to which the applicant will use grant funds to address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to develop a clear set of goals as well as the applicant's plan for achieving those goals. In designing this plan, applicants should consider the risks that could prevent success and what strategies they will implement to counteract those risks to ensure the proposed project is implemented successfully and will achieve its goals. Further, applicants are encouraged to identify barriers to scaling the proposed project and address how they will overcome the identified barriers.

**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**

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

(1) The extent to which the management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones for completion of major project activities, the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, and annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

(2) The clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national or regional (as defined in the Validation Notice Inviting Applications) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex projects.

**Note:** In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate both the successes and challenges of the project and use the lessons from their ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project to improve the project. Applicants also are encouraged to explain the organization's plan to operate the project at a national level or regional level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to think about how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex projects, such as an i3 Validation grant.

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

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for how each question will be addressed.

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

**(3) The extent to which the evaluation will study the project at the proposed level of scale, including, where appropriate, generating information about potential differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings and for diverse student population groups.**

**(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.**

**(5) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measureable threshold for acceptable implementation.**

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

**Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The applicant should address whether the methods for evaluation would meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and how the evaluation design will ensure the project will be evaluated at the proposed level of scale. The response to this criterion should include a description of the proposed sample size and the estimated project impacts as well as the key components of the proposed project for implementation. Finally, applicants should also address whether sufficient resources, which may include the qualifications of the independent evaluator, are included in the project budget to carry out the evaluation effectively.**

#### **Strengths:**

Investigators propose to study the effect of project Higher Achievement (HA) a year-round expanded learning program that will provide supplemental learning activities for disadvantaged 5th through 8th dard students. The investigators propose an evaluation plan that addresses most of the evaluation requirements of the i3 funds. Investigators present relevant and key research questions that will be addressed by the methods and research design.

Their study proposes using a cluster Randomized Controlled Trial (RTC) with a sufficiently large sample size to conduct a powerful study that will result in reliable answers to the research questions, preventing type I and II errors. This study will therefore be more likely to meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.

Investigators will contract with DMRC evaluation team that will conduct all evaluation activities. Evaluation experts appear to have extensive experience with design and analysis. This group will bring a lot of strengths to the project.

Investigators also presented plans to study differentiated outcomes for diverse student populations. Budgeted resources for this purpose are sufficient for carrying out the proposed evaluation plan.

#### **Weaknesses:**

No major weaknesses were identified for this project. However, investigators should consider the design of a better plan to study (and improve if needed) the psychometrics of their surveys and other qualitative measures. Investigators must also consider the adjustments of reading and math scores collected from states assessments when conducting their statistical analysis.

**Reader's Score: 26**

#### **Priority Questions**

**CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity - CPP 1: Improv Cost-Effectiveness and Productivity**

**1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that address one of the following areas:**

- (a) Substantially improving student outcomes without commensurately increasing per-student costs.
- (b) Maintaining student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.
- (c) Substantially improving student outcomes while substantially decreasing per-student costs.

Other requirements related to Competitive Preference Priority 1:

An application addressing this priority must provide--

- (1) A clear and coherent budget that identifies expected student outcomes before and after the practice, the cost per student for the practice, and a clear calculation of the cost per student served;
- (2) A compelling discussion of the expected cost-effectiveness of the practice compared with alternative practices;
- (3) A clear delineation of one-time costs versus ongoing costs and a plan for sustaining the project, particularly ongoing costs, after the expiration of i3 funding;
- (4) Identification of specific activities designed to increase substantially the cost-effectiveness of the practice, such as re-designing costly components of the practice (while maintaining efficacy) or testing multiple versions of the practice in order to identify the most cost-effective approach; and
- (5) A project evaluation that addresses the cost-effectiveness of the proposed practice.

**Strengths:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer

Reader's Score: 0

**CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption of Effective Practi**

- 1. Under this priority, we provide funding to projects that enable broad adoption of effective practices. An application proposing to address this priority must, as part of its application:
  - (a) Identify the practice or practices that the application proposes to prepare for broad adoption, including formalizing the practice (i.e., establish and define key elements of the practice), codifying (i.e., develop a guide or tools to support the dissemination of information on key elements of the practice), and explaining why there is a need for formalization and codification.
  - (b) Evaluate different forms of the practice to identify the critical components of the practice that are crucial to its success and sustainability, including the adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners.
  - (c) Provide a coherent and comprehensive plan for developing materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that other entities would need in order to implement the practice effectively and with fidelity.
  - (d) Commit to assessing the replicability and adaptability of the practice by supporting the implementation of the practice in a variety of locations during the project period using the materials, training, toolkits, or other supports that were developed for the i3-supported practice.

**Strengths:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer

**Weaknesses:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer

**Reader's Score: 0**

**IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning - IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning**

- 1. The Secretary encourages applicants to propose projects that improve the coordination and alignment between early learning and development systems and elementary education systems in order to improve transitions for children from birth through third grade.**

**General:**

N/A Scored by another reviewer

**Reader's Score: 0**

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 08/06/2014 02:07 PM