

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:25 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Statement		
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	0	
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	27
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	15	0
Total	100	82

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - 2014 Development Full Panels - 11: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

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 absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project would implement a novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the applicant's proposed project addresses the absolute priority and the subpart that it seeks to meet. Additionally, the Secretary asks that applicants explain how the proposed project is unique. Applicants should explain how their proposed projects fit into existing theory, knowledge, or practice, and how their proposed projects will serve as exemplars for new practices in the field.

Strengths:

Since the rural community cannot always have high speed internet connections, this proposal looks to integrate with multiple community organizations and businesses to offer wireless "hot spots" throughout the community, to include school buses. This is seen as a novel approach to solving a critical need.

This proposal looks to raise the technological acumen of all teachers, students, and parents (page e19), which is also seen as a novel approach. To include students with disabilities, non-native English speakers, and pregnant or parenting students is valuable since these groups can be perceived as vulnerable populations within rural communities especially.

The proposal meets the needs for Priority 6 and Priority 5 subpart B.

The advancement of theory is possible by developing impact studies with neighboring rural school systems; this is a preferred method of testing as every student within the Montgomery County Schools will be served by the ACCESS program. This proof of concept will be more easily implemented by other rural districts because of this research (page e24).

Weaknesses:

None identified.

Reader's Score: 35

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 and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g., a fully developed logic model of the proposed project).

(2) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address what activities the applicant will undertake in its proposed project, and how the applicant will ensure its project implementation is successful in achieving the project goals.

Strengths:

The goals, with stated sub-goals, are clearly articulated with the intended outcomes (pages e25 – e26).

Page e63 provides the well-developed logic model that is based on spheres that are present throughout the proposal.

Objectives 1.3 – 1.7 look beyond the technological advances of the project; the anticipated outcomes include the overall engagement of students due to the integration of ACCESS.

Weaknesses:

Objective 2.3, stated on page e26 indicated that the Technology Specialist will be utilized by teachers four times per month. It is unclear how the district will be able to handle this level of interaction based on the statement that the Technology Specialists will serve two elementary schools each (page e33). In order for the four experiences per month to be authentic and helpful, they may require more complex solutions – more quality of questions versus quantity of questions.

Strategy 1 on page e27 does not provide enough detail of how the LMS will be implemented specifically at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Additionally, training for teachers beyond Home Base is not described in enough detail.

Reader's Score: 27

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 extent of the demonstrated commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders whose participation is critical to the project 's long-term success.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope as the proposed project.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate the success or challenges of the project and use that feedback to make improvements to the project, and the role of key partners and their impact on the long-term success of the project, and how the project director 's prior experiences have prepared them for implementing the proposed project of this size and scope successfully.

Strengths:

The management plan and timeline (page e34) provides milestones that are mapped to the objectives with the responsible parties.

The key personnel is identified and perceived as complete (page e33). An added benefit is the percentage of effort each of position will fulfill with the project.

The independent external evaluator will serve a critical role in the development of this program; it is valuable to see that it was included in the proposal.

Weaknesses:

None identified.

Reader's Score: 20

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 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.

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

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, applicants should describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions.

The Secretary encourages applicants to include questions about the effectiveness of the proposed project with the specific student populations being served with grant funds. Further, the Secretary encourages applicants to identify what implementation and performance data the evaluation will generate and how the evaluation will provide data during the grant period to help indicate whether the project is on track to meet its goals. 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

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:30 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Statement		
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	0	
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	33
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	28
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	15	0
Total	100	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - 2014 Development Full Panels - 11: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

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 absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project would implement a novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the applicant's proposed project addresses the absolute priority and the subpart that it seeks to meet. Additionally, the Secretary asks that applicants explain how the proposed project is unique. Applicants should explain how their proposed projects fit into existing theory, knowledge, or practice, and how their proposed projects will serve as exemplars for new practices in the field.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes to address absolute priorities 6 and 5 (Subpart B) through a project titled, ACCESS: A Culture Creating Effective Systems for Success. The proposed project and corresponding activities represent a novel approach that builds on the success of several models identified in the proposal on page e21 and e22.

The applicant proposes to contribute to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge and practices by developing and implementing a districtwide redesign of the Montgomery County School District's educational practices by imbedding a culture of technology-based education. The applicant proposes to study the effects of this redesign and disseminate an effective model for implementation in other rural settings.

Independent strategies embedded in the ACCESS model have been successfully pilot tested. The success of these independent strategies holds promise for the success of the proposed activities.

Weaknesses:

The proposal would be more competitive if examples were provided for the type of technology-based activities the students in Montgomery will engage in.

Reader's Score: 33

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 and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g., a fully developed logic model of the proposed project).

(2) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address what activities the applicant will undertake in its proposed project, and how the applicant will ensure its project implementation is successful in achieving the project goals.

Strengths:

The applicant presents the proposed goals, objectives, and activities in a clear, realistic, and coherent manner. Each goal and objective has realistic expectations and a means to measure how successfully the applicant has reached its proposed measure.

The applicant provides potential risks and identifies plausible strategies to address these risks if they occur during the proposed three year funding cycle.

The applicant proposes to insure the successful implementation of the state mandated Home Base system of instructional improvement.

The applicant proposes to create 1:1 access by the end of the funding cycle. This is an important goal in light of the fact that the state of North Carolina is scheduled to stop funding printed text books by 2017. In addition, the funding support will allow the school district to establish multiple access points throughout the county to enhance the ability for high-needs students to gain access to the Internet.

Weaknesses:

The applicant is encouraged to provide examples of the types of technology-based activities that students will engage in if successfully funded.

Reader's Score: 28

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 extent of the demonstrated commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders whose participation is critical to the project 's long-term success.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope as the proposed project.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate the success or challenges of the project and use that feedback to make improvements to the project, and the role of key partners and their impact on the long-term success of the project, and how the project director 's prior experiences have prepared them for implementing the proposed project of this size and scope successfully.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly articulates a thorough management plan that highlights key responsibilities and well defined objectives. Each objective is written in measurable terms in order to assess progress on an ongoing basis. Annual performance targets are provided including who will take responsibility for the oversight of each activity.

The project director is well qualified to oversee this project and has extensive experience in overseeing similar sized projects and budgets.

The applicant provides a plan to ensure regular feedback and continuous improvement that includes the use of an Advisory Council, a Management Team, a Media and Technology Advisory Committee, and an External Evaluator.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were found in the proposal.

Reader's Score: 20

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 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.

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

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, applicants should describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The Secretary encourages applicants to include questions about the effectiveness of the proposed project with the specific student populations being served with grant funds. Further, the Secretary

encourages applicants to identify what implementation and performance data the evaluation will generate and how the evaluation will provide data during the grant period to help indicate whether the project is on track to meet its goals. 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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:30 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:50 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Statement		
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	0	0
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	35
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	30
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	18
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	15	0
Total	100	83

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - 2014 Development Full Panels - 11: 84.411C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

The applicant organization clearly describes they will be addressing Absolute Priority 5(b) as well as Absolute Priority 6.

This application presents a comprehensive project that met nearly all of the criteria and their sub parts. There was considerable detail provided that made the project "come alive" so as to know exactly what was going to happen over the grant period and who was responsible for each activity.

A minor point that was thoroughly described related to the metrics that will be used. It was explained that the evaluator would develop this but a basic set of metrics would have made the discussion more complete.

Reader's Score: 0

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 absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project would implement a novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the applicant's proposed project addresses the absolute priority and the subpart that it seeks to meet. Additionally, the Secretary asks that applicants explain how the proposed project is unique. Applicants should explain how their proposed projects fit into existing theory, knowledge, or practice, and how their proposed projects will serve as exemplars for new practices in the field.

Strengths:

The applicant organization clearly describes they will be addressing Absolute Priority 5(b) as well as Absolute Priority 6. In both cases, they present detailed information on their proposed project to use technology to provide low-income students and students in rural settings who need access to college-level course work. They consider high-need students who will be a part of a district-wide redesign implementation of their educational practices. (p. 1-2).

The applicant organization clearly describes their intention of implementing a unique and novel approach to redefine the way that students learn and also the manner educators teach. This they believe will help achieve a long-term impact in rural education. The ACCESS project model they will use brings high quality teaching and learning resources as it blends with real-time student/teacher access to courses along with connected teaching and professional learning. (p. 4-6).

The potential contribution will be to take the current technical strategies from promising practices to an evidenced-based model. They intend to accomplish this by two impact studies performed by their evaluation team. Those are: a quasi-experimental designs and a short interrupted time series design with a comparison group. They will compare outcomes in their district to two neighboring rural school systems initially and then to others throughout the state. (p. 7-8).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 35

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 and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g., a fully developed logic model of the proposed project).

(2) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address what activities the applicant will undertake in its proposed project, and how the applicant will ensure its project implementation is successful in achieving the project goals.

Strengths:

The applicant organization clearly described and presented their three goals along with detailed measurable objectives for each goal. Those goals are: provide high quality teaching and learning resources; expand the reach of effective teachers through connect teaching and redesign; and developing a systemic process for on-line access for teachers and student to improve instruction and monitor progress. Every goal had from 3 to 7 objectives that were clearly measurable. (p. 8-9).

The Logic Model in (Appendix D) was outstanding and clearly linked the three goals to the strategies, outputs and intermediate outcomes. Very easy to read and link to the key goals for the project.

The applicant organization clearly described and explained a number of potential challenges or risks that might impede the project as well as solutions to those risks. Included in the discussion of risks, barriers to program activities were also mentioned including the county's high teen pregnancy rates, large numbers of low-income students in rural settings and the limited number of highly qualified teachers in some subject areas. (p. GEPA Statements 1-3). Those factors as well as the barriers such as teacher bias in assessments, teacher reluctance to shift their thinking and sustainability after the Federal grant period are a few other risks they recognize. They have in place well-thought out strategies for working through those potential problems. (p. 14-16).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 30

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 extent of the demonstrated commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders whose participation is critical to the project 's long-term success.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope as the proposed project.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate the success or challenges of the project and use that feedback to make improvements to the project, and the role of key partners and their impact on the long-term success of the project, and how the project director 's prior experiences have prepared them for implementing the proposed project of this size and scope successfully.

Strengths:

The applicant organization provided a very detailed table indicating the key responsibilities for all of the project staff including a 100% commitment from the Project Director. (p. 16). Also included was a comprehensive Management Plan and Timeline indicating milestones and responsible parties as well as a link to which objective those milestones refer to.

The applicant organization included a detailed list of partners, stakeholders and community groups who have committed in-kind and financial contributions totaling nearly \$550,000. These 34 community partners provided strong letters of support as well as Memorandums of Understanding for the project. (p. 18, Appendices C and G).

The applicant has recognized the importance of continuous quality improvement and feedback as the project moves forward. As part of the Advisory Council's quarterly meetings, program strategies will be discussed and re-evaluated. In addition other groups like their Management Team, Media and Technology committee and their evaluator will assure that there is an on-going review of all aspects of the program. (p. 19-20).

The application has selected a talented and experienced Project Director and included a resume of his previous work. He is presently the Director of Secondary Education and has lead similar Federal projects in the past. (p. 20-21).

Weaknesses:

The application did not clearly indicate the metrics that will be used to assess the project and only stated that "Our evaluator will use multiple performance metrics and measures to monitor the program." Also there was a brief mention in this statement without any details: the management team will "review metrics provided via Home Base, (i.e., usage and assessment data)" it was not clear what those precise metrics will consist of. (p. 19-20).

Reader's Score: 18

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 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.

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

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, applicants should describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The Secretary encourages applicants to include questions about the effectiveness of the proposed project with the specific student populations being served with grant funds. Further, the Secretary encourages applicants to identify what implementation and performance data the evaluation will generate and how the evaluation will provide data during the grant period to help indicate whether the project is on track to meet its goals. 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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:50 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:55 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Statement		
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	0	
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	0
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	15	12
Total	100	12

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - 2014 Development Full Panels - 11: 84.411C

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

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 absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project would implement a novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the applicant's proposed project addresses the absolute priority and the subpart that it seeks to meet. Additionally, the Secretary asks that applicants explain how the proposed project is unique. Applicants should explain how their proposed projects fit into existing theory, knowledge, or practice, and how their proposed projects will serve as exemplars for new practices in the field.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g., a fully developed logic model of the proposed project).

(2) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address what activities the applicant will undertake in its proposed project, and how the applicant will ensure its project implementation is successful in achieving the project goals.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 extent of the demonstrated commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders whose participation is critical to the project 's long-term success.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope as the proposed project.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate the success or challenges of the project and use that feedback to make improvements to the project, and the role of key partners and their impact on the long-term success of the project, and how the project director 's prior experiences have prepared them for implementing the proposed project of this size and scope successfully.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 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.

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

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, applicants should describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The Secretary encourages applicants to include questions about the effectiveness of the proposed project with the specific student populations being served with grant funds. Further, the Secretary encourages applicants to identify what implementation and performance data the evaluation will generate and how the evaluation will provide data during the grant period to help indicate whether the project is on track to meet its goals. 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 applicant provided clear questions to be addressed by the evaluation that focused on the impact of the project (pg. 21). The analytic approach for answering the research questions were provided and appropriate (pg. 22). Comparisons between program students and similar students from other high schools will be made and the key variables were identified for matching students via 1:1 propensity score matching (pg. 23). The minimal detectable effective was identified for both studies and were appropriate (pg. 23). A measureable threshold for acceptable implementation was provided for each key component and sub-components (pg. 24-25). A description of the power analysis for each analysis was also provided and appropriate (pg. 24-25). Overall the plan provides a clear analytic approach for evaluating the program's impact with appropriate statistical methods to account for students "nested" in schools. The budget narrative provides a breakdown of the amount of money to be spent annually on the evaluation and the amount appears appropriate and sufficient to carry out the evaluation effectively (budget narrative). The evaluators identified have strong backgrounds in evaluation and experience in carrying out evaluations of this kind.

Weaknesses:

The comparison schools were identified for matching students, but commitment from the other schools was not clear. Obtaining data for students at other schools can be difficult and if data from the comparison schools cannot be accessed, then the whole analysis plan will not be possible (pg. 22). No information was provided about the types of activities the comparison schools offer students in terms of instructional programs which can alter students' learning experiences. Similarly, the types of teacher professional development offered to the teachers at the comparison schools can have an impact on a true comparison of the proposed activities in this project.

Reader's Score: 12

Status: Submitted
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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/18/2014 01:40 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Summary Statement		
Summary Statement		
1. Summary Statement	0	
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	35	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	0
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	20	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	15	12
Total	100	12

Technical Review Form

Panel #11 - 2014 Development Full Panels - 11: 84.411C

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: Montgomery County Schools (U411C140128)

Questions

Summary Statement - Summary Statement

1. Summary Statement (Optional)

General:

Reader's Score:

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 absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

(2) The extent to which the proposed project would implement a novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

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

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the applicant's proposed project addresses the absolute priority and the subpart that it seeks to meet. Additionally, the Secretary asks that applicants explain how the proposed project is unique. Applicants should explain how their proposed projects fit into existing theory, knowledge, or practice, and how their proposed projects will serve as exemplars for new practices in the field.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals (e.g., a fully developed logic model of the proposed project).

(2) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address what activities the applicant will undertake in its proposed project, and how the applicant will ensure its project implementation is successful in achieving the project goals.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 extent of the demonstrated commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders whose participation is critical to the project 's long-term success.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing projects of similar size and scope as the proposed project.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to address how the project team will evaluate the success or challenges of the project and use that feedback to make improvements to the project, and the role of key partners and their impact on the long-term success of the project, and how the project director 's prior experiences have prepared them for implementing the proposed project of this size and scope successfully.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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 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.**
- (3) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.**
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.**

Note: In responding to this criterion, applicants should describe the key evaluation questions and address how the proposed evaluation methodologies will allow the project to answer those questions. The Secretary encourages applicants to include questions about the effectiveness of the proposed project with the specific student populations being served with grant funds. Further, the Secretary encourages applicants to identify what implementation and performance data the evaluation will generate and how the evaluation will provide data during the grant period to help indicate whether the project is on track to meet its goals. 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:

Two key questions related to impact of the program on students are clearly stated (p. 21), and appropriate methods for addressing each are proposed. For example, the research question related to elementary and middle school children identifies the grade 3-8 assessments that will be used and describes a propensity score matching process for identifying a comparison group (p. 21-25). The applicant discusses why a short interrupted time series design with comparison schools is most appropriate for the research question exploring impact on students in grades 3-8, and a quasi-experimental design with a grade 9 cohort is most appropriate for exploring impact on students in grade 9 (p. 22-24). The evaluation plan includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including proposed sample sizes and minimum detectable effect sizes that align with the expected project impact (p. 23-24), along with a careful description of their power analyses for identifying minimal detectable effect sizes (p. e113-114). The applicant includes a summary of appropriate analytic approaches for addressing the research questions, including HLM models with repeated measures over time (p. 24). The applicant clearly specifies objectives and benchmarks with measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation for each project goal (p. 24-25). The applicant specifies instruments or measures to assess each objective and includes a data collection timeline to ensure that each key component and outcome is addressed (p. 8-9). The applicant proposes to devote 10% of grant funds per year, for a total of \$300,000 over the three years of the grant, to the evaluation, which are sufficient resources to effectively carry out the proposed evaluation studies (p. e128). The two evaluators have considerable experience in conducting similar studies (p. 25).

Weaknesses:

Although high quality teaching and learning resources and effective teacher-reach are key components of the program, (p. 24-25), no key questions are included related to impact on teachers. Although the applicant collects a wealth of data regarding implementation of key components (p. 24-25), the analysis plan does not include moderating variables or an exploration of differential impact due to differences in teacher dosage/participation or fidelity of implementation. The applicant does not capture information about student activities or teacher professional development conducted in the control schools, which could mirror some of the professional development conducted in the treatment schools. Without careful measures of fidelity of implementation, project effects on students could be underestimated. The applicant proposes to serve students K-2 but does not include effects on these students in the research questions.

Reader's Score: 12

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