

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2014 11:25 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	24
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	25	25
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Priority Questions		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
1. CPP1	3	0
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
1. CPP2	5	5
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
1. Early Learning	0	0
Total	108	74

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2014 Scale-Up Panel - 1: 84.411A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

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 a national need.
- (2) The extent of the expected impact of the project on relevant outcomes (as defined in the notice), including the estimated impact of the project on student outcomes (particularly those related to student achievement (as defined in this notice) and the breadth of the project's impact, compared with alternative practices or methods of addressing similar needs.
- (3) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address a national need and how the applicant determined an unmet demand for the proposed project exists. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to quantify the expected impact of their proposed project if it is successful, and explain why the applicant expects the proposed project to have the described impact. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the expected impact of the proposed project on student outcomes compares to other practices.

Strengths:

Existing project demonstrates strong, preliminary positive impacts on target student populations (rural, minority, 1st generation college bound) in graduation rates, college going rates, transferable credits, HS attendance, and HS suspensions rates

The applicant justifies its intervention based on impact studies and clearly state (although not in Appendix D), the interventions the applicant plans to implement and the intended student outcomes the intervention is expected to impact. These are clearly stated in numerous places throughout the application and supported by the i3 validation study findings.

Strong rationale for program design (lack of success and wide achievement gap for high school graduation and college going, retention and graduation among the target population to be served -- rural, minority, low income, first generation) based on studies of impact and the organization's track record in delivering model to multiple (in-state) sites and successfully to target student population. Does focus on serving high need students. Serves rural, low income, predominantly minority and/or first generation students as the primary target populations.

Well-documented scale up program design and scale up program impact based on data, implementation, and partner history: with NC leading nation in high school graduation rates and those earning high school diplomas and associate's degrees or transferable college credit. Because the program results in programmatic and policy changes at scale up sites and includes increasing the number of states involved and in state sites -- and clear criteria for additional SEAs to become involved and to which the SEAs have to commit, the program meets scalability criteria.

Significant sample size (13,300 students and 862 teachers) to meet scale up criteria.

Prior i3 validation grant and evaluator experience with that grant's evaluation

Weaknesses:

None identified

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 extent to which the project would build the capacity of the applicant to scale up and sustain the project or would create an organization capable of expanding if successful outcomes are achieved.

(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.

(3) The sufficiency of the resources to support effective project implementation, including the project's plan for ensuring funding after the period of the Federal grant.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will build capacity so that the proposed project can be scaled to and sustained at a national level. The Secretary also encourages applicants to address how the proposed project will overcome barriers that prevented the applicant from previously scaling the project. Lastly, the Secretary encourages applicants to consider the resources necessary for project implementation to ensure that the proposed project continues after the grant period ends.

Strengths:

Clearly articulated model with six "tested" and "replicable" (demonstrated) design principles, integrated system of support, along with clear goals and a logic model based on validation grant experience and multiple and differentiated scale-up strategies (aligned to validation grant experience and logic model). Codified design principles. Implementation vehicles include early college high schools, comprehensive high schools, district reach sites – thus demonstrating multiple, differentiated venues as well as geographic locations.

The design principle, which addresses "review," allows for monitoring of implementation fidelity. And, regular collection of formative and benchmark data allows for ongoing monitoring of program implementation and course correction and support.

Documented role of partners to ensure effective and replicable implementation

Documented states (3) and partners to ensure replication; documented partner commitment –and higher than required match --to implement and partner contributions: commitments from schools, districts, states. Strong letters of support from a broad cross section of partners.

Demonstrated understanding and articulation of various states' policy environment and constraints, and how states' policy environments can act as barriers to implementation; and strategies for overcoming policy constraints.

Identifies one big barrier -- dual enrollment policy variations -- and one other barrier -- the lack of alignment between K-12 and higher education systems and also 7 factors to consider when bringing on additional partners and their commitment (and state and local environment) to the project's implementation. Does indicate that one of the scale up strategies includes "providing state- and regional-level capacity building to two additional states to set the foundation for opening early college model.

Funding match in excess of what is required along with its own resource model is strong.

Talent development is one of the core design principles and addresses instructional practices' support through their

Integrated Systems of Support rather than overall teacher and principal career paths; however "support" is addressed through their instructional coaching, leadership coaching, coach university, summer institute, and new teacher institute.

Weaknesses:

While there are two barriers addressed, this reviewer felt there could have been more sufficient coverage of how the project will build its own and others capacity to address the state to state dual enrollment policy variations and higher education/K-12 systems' alignment variations

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 level (as defined in this notice) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of any partners and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project s long-term success (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers unions).

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

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. Applicants are encouraged to explain the organization s plan that will enable the project to operate at a national level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to address how the project director s past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex, and rapidly growing projects, such as an i3 Scale-up grant.

Strengths:

A balanced formative and benchmark assessment system monitors progress of project along the way to ensure implementation monitoring and fidelity and course correction

The project has a clearly defined workplan (with formative and benchmark data as well as milestones associated with project activities), measurable goals, objectives and measurable outcomes, aligned strategies (designed to address implementation fidelity and implementation barriers such as policy constraints), logic models for the project and the scale up project; organizational chart (with clearly defined roles & responsibilities) focused on state and national implementation; and specific partner and scale up sites. Clearly defines the interventions and measurable student outcomes the project will seek to impact

Furthermore there are clearly defined roles and responsibilities and an organizational chart that is coherent and aligned with the project design and execution. Project roles and expertise of those assigned to support the project's scale up are strong; with strong resumes based on requisite experience included.

Evidence of prior project management and project leadership across multiple sites as well as organizational infrastructure to execute project effectively

Strong, diverse resumes and experience sets of key project personnel

Multiple strategies to build capacity to deliver, including data-based decision making; seven schools as demonstration sites; specific design principles that have been tested; and additional state sites (4, three of which have been identified and one to be recruited via specific criteria and an RFP process)

Weaknesses:

None identified

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 measurable 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:

Reviewed by another panelist

Weaknesses:

Reviewed by another panelist

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity - CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & 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

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices

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:

Fulfills criteria associated with broad adoption; is working with four states to replicate a proven model: Implementation vehicles include early college high schools, comprehensive high schools, district reach sites – thus demonstrating multiple, differentiated venues as well as geographic locations

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

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

Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	19
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	24
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	25	24
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Priority Questions		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
1. CPP1	3	0
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
1. CPP2	5	5
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
1. Early Learning	0	0
Total	108	72

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2014 Scale-Up Panel - 1: 84.411A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

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 a national need.
- (2) The extent of the expected impact of the project on relevant outcomes (as defined in the notice), including the estimated impact of the project on student outcomes (particularly those related to student achievement (as defined in this notice) and the breadth of the project's impact, compared with alternative practices or methods of addressing similar needs.
- (3) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address a national need and how the applicant determined an unmet demand for the proposed project exists. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to quantify the expected impact of their proposed project if it is successful, and explain why the applicant expects the proposed project to have the described impact. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the expected impact of the proposed project on student outcomes compares to other practices.

Strengths:

The applicant has ably demonstrated how the proposed project, Early College Strategies for All (ECSA) addresses the national needs. The applicant proposes that the national needs are gaps in achievement and high school dropout rates for students in grades 9-12 (p. 5). This is evidenced as follows.

Based on the December 2013 Nation's report Card the achievement gaps are substantial as demonstrated by the following.

- Math and Reading - Black-white gap from 12th grade is 30 points
- The 12th grade white-Hispanic gap is 21 points in Math and 22 in Reading
- Minority students dropout at disproportionately higher rates than their white counterparts
- The dropout rate for low income students is 5 times greater than their high-income counterparts (pp. 5-6)
- Rural dropouts are less likely to return to school to pursue a GED

The data supports the proposed need with data from well documented national reports.

The proposed project outcomes are aligned to the project goals and the i3 program. The expected impact of the project is as follows.

- Reach 13,300 students over 5 years
- Expand one District Reach Model and six new early college school settings in NC (as national study schools)
- Open 6 early colleges in two other states
- Provide state and regional level capacity building (policy development, guidance, and increase leadership capacity) in two other states (pp. 9-10).

As such, there is a strong likelihood of increasing graduation rates and college credits for traditionally under-represented students and the potential that new states will enact legislation and policy changes to expand early college access to high school students (pp.11-12).

Out of 13 evaluation studies with interventions that meet the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards, the applicant's Early College High School Model is one of few with effective interventions and positive impact as evidenced by an over 5% increase in graduation rates (pp. 13-14).

There is a strong likelihood that the proposed project will have the expected impact of reaching 13, 300 students over five years as evidenced by positive impact from an i3 Validation grant serving 18 rural schools and 7,000 students in 5 years.

The preliminary findings from the Validation grant demonstrate that:

- 74 of the early colleges in NC had graduating cohorts in 2013
- 62 schools had a 95% graduation rate
- 25% of those schools had graduation rates of 100%
- Students also graduated with two years of transferable college credits (p. 8).

The applicant proposes to utilize the same research based North Carolina New Schools (NCNS) Design Principles from the original small schools design and the Validation grant (pp. 7-8) for the proposed project, which is a strong foundation to start from.

Additionally, the applicant provided four study citations with two experimental studies (Appendix D). The first two studies are from a longitudinal study that has to date demonstrated "positive impacts on student enrollment and success in a college preparatory course of study" (p. e 79). The last two study citations are from a "retrospective experimental study" that does meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards (p. e 79). Citations for all studies were included as well as the actual report for the The Impact of Early College High Schools on College Readiness and College Enrollment. This report provides actual data and evidence of success and positive impact.

The applicant proposes to scale up and serve NC school districts and districts in 4 other geographically diverse states (Illinois, Mississippi, South Carolina and one to be determined via RFP state (p. 4). This is in part evidence of the unmet national need for early colleges and supports for students to stay in school, do well and go on to college. These additional state partners will enable the applicant to reach the proposed level of scale.

Of positive note, in addition to targeting students with low income and traditionally under-represented groups, the applicant proposes to target first generation college-going students.

Weaknesses:

While the applicant notes that 7,000 demographically diverse students graduated from early college in a five year period, it is unclear which subgroups of students are represented and equally important the total number of students who graduated from early college in that 5 year period (p. 8).

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

- (1) The extent to which the project would build the capacity of the applicant to scale up and sustain the project or would create an organization capable of expanding if successful outcomes are achieved.**
- (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.**
- (3) The sufficiency of the resources to support effective project implementation, including the project's plan for ensuring funding after the period of the Federal grant.**

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will build capacity so that the proposed project can be scaled to and sustained at a national level. The Secretary also encourages applicants to address how the proposed project will overcome

barriers that prevented the applicant from previously scaling the project. Lastly, the Secretary encourages applicants to consider the resources necessary for project implementation to ensure that the proposed project continues after the grant period ends.

Strengths:

The applicant has comprehensively demonstrated how it will utilize project funds to showcase model schools, open new early college schools, build SEA capacity for implementation during and after the grant in NC and four other states (pp. 17-18). The project will allow the applicant to implement a third new setting for implementation in addition to the current Early College High Schools and Comprehensive High Schools settings (p. 17). The District Reach is a new Scale-up strategy to offer off site and online courses for students in middle and high schools (p. 18). This new strategy has the potential to further increase sustainability as the NCNS Design Principles would be infused throughout the district - not just one school.

The applicant has provided a sound rationale, key components, services and outcomes in a logic model (p. 21). As such, there is a strong potential to reach the stated outcomes. This is in part evidenced by the following capacity building products and services of this project.

- Instructional coaching
- Leadership Coaching
- Professional development- Coach University
- Staff -support- Summer Institute
- Staff support - New Teacher Institute (pp.19-20)

Each of these services aligns to the stated needs, and project goals to expand the depth of services in NC and scale-up to other states.

Of positive note is the applicant's selection process for proposed project partners. Schools and states were identified via seven factors (p. 23). These factors and the selection process further enhance long-term sustainability after the grant period. As one example, many of the factors look at the partner's long term performance (i.e. student performance, policy, accreditation etc.) and demonstrated SEA and LEA commitment (p. 23).

The applicant has noted the variation of dual enrollment policies across states as a significant barrier that has prevented the applicant from reaching the level of scale proposed in the application. The applicant supports this barrier with evidence from several states (Mississippi, Illinois, and South Carolina) and suggests that the challenge starts with the variety of policies that exists when each state starts the process (p. 25).

Noteworthy, is the applicant's proposed SEA capacity building (policy development, guidance and leadership support) as a response the barrier. Having an outcome that will address this barrier (p. 22) increases the likelihood that the applicant can mitigate the barrier and reach the level of scale proposed in the application.

Another strength is the applicant's proposal for public-private partnership and coalition capacity building (p. 27). This is demonstrative of proactively addressing areas before they become barriers.

The applicant has comprehensively demonstrated the sufficiency of resources to support effective project implementation and resources for ensuring continued implementation after the grant period. This is evidenced by the following.

- The applicant program has been in operation for 10 years, the current NCNS operating budget is \$14.7 million and has 57 highly qualified staff (p.13).
- The costs for implementation and for scale up are known costs.
- Each school creates its own trainer of trainer model ("Coach University") through the Integrated Systems of Support (p.28)
- Each participating district is required to implement a Design Principle Rubric Review Process. This self - evaluation ensures implementation fidelity and reinforces "change as a continuum of continuous improvement" (p. 28). Both are necessary elements of sustainability.
- The applicant has a higher than required match (p. 27) indicating strong partner support.

Additionally, the proposed capacity building strategy to create policy and obtain legislative support is a viable and healthy approach to long term sustainability (pp. 10 and 25).

Individually and collectively, these strategies all represent sufficient and demonstrated evidence of the necessary

resources for both project implementation and for long term project sustainability after the grant period. Overall, the applicant has very completely responded to these criteria.

Weaknesses:

Given that they are "known costs", it would have made for a stronger proposal to provide the actual costs for implementation per type of service (i.e. early College High School, Comprehensive High School, and District Reach, pp. 17-18).

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 level (as defined in this notice) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of any partners and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers unions).

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

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. Applicants are encouraged to explain the organization's plan that will enable the project to operate at a national level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to address how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex, and rapidly growing projects, such as an i3 Scale-up grant.

Strengths:

The proposed management plan articulates major activities, milestones, responsible persons and a 5 year timeline for accomplishing the goals, activities and outcomes as evidenced by the chart on pages 31-32.

The goals and key measurable outcomes were provided on pages 22 and 29. All are specific, measurable, and time bound. The applicant noted the metrics that will be used to assess progress on an ongoing basis, as well as the annual performance targets the applicant will use to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

The applicant has clearly articulated all key personnel roles and responsibilities. This is evidenced by the Table 2: Key Personnel Functions (p. 34) and the job descriptions for all key personnel Appendix F). Based on the resumes and position descriptions (pp. e98-155) the key project personnel demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences to manage a project of this scope and size.

The applicant has provided a clear, complete and coherent multi-year financial and operating model. This is evidenced by the current \$14.7 annual operating budget which is maintained by 2.1 fiscal staff. The Senior Director of Finance and

Administration has 25 years of experience in accounts management and financial and compliance auditing. She has done this work for NCNS for 7 years (p. 36). Additionally, the proposed budget on pages e224-236 appears reasonable and is aligned to the proposed activities.

The applicant's proposed plan to operate the project at a national level is supported by its implementation of an i3 Validation grant, the continuation of the founding President who for 10 years has garnered national recognition for NCNS as evidenced by the Harvard "Innovation in Government" Award (p. 36). Additionally, the applicant has demonstrated that it has highly qualified and experienced staff to implement and manage a project of this scope and size and will add staff to meet the expansion needs.

The applicant has comprehensively demonstrated that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant. This is evidenced in Tables 3 and 4 which clearly list the project collaborative partners (pp. 37-38). This is also demonstrated by the LEA partner letters of commitment and the out-of state partners (i.e. Mississippi DOE) letters of commitment in Appendix G. The out-of-state partners have been vetted and selected using 7 selection factors and are required to provide a 10% match, more than the required 5%.

Noteworthy are the 8 college letters of support.

Additionally, the applicant has demonstrated its ability to meet match fund requirements by securing \$2 million in private funding from 15 Validation grant partners. Meeting match fund a requirement is further evidenced by the already secured \$100,000 from longtime partner SAS. The applicant has also provided five formal letters of commitment for matching funds (Appendix G). These letters and the partner matches are strong evidence of longstanding and sustainable support.

The applicant proposes that the current Validation grant project Director will transfer to the proposed scale-up project as the in-state Co-Project Director. While only having two years with the Validation grant, he has close to 15 years working in programs that support graduation and college attainment (resume). While the out-of state co-director is still to be hired, the applicant did provide a detailed position description (p.e138-139). As such, it appears that both the in-state and out of state co-project directors will have the necessary experience to manage a large, complex, and rapidly growing project of this scope and size.

Weaknesses:

It would have strengthened the proposal to provide more clarity in some of the goals. As one example, the outcome for schools to increase enrollment in and credits earned in college is not clear as to which schools this applies. It is unclear if the outcome applies to all schools in the project (models schools and new early college schools) or which specific schools it applies to.

The same holds true for the outcome to have 50% of students complete at least 12 college credits (p. 22). It is unclear if this is 50% of all participating students in all five states.

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 measurable 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:

This criterion was evaluated by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

This criterion was evaluated by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity - CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & 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:

The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices

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:

The applicant has aptly addressed how it will formalize the practice by building SEA capacity in policy development, guidance and leadership capacity. Strong policy development is a viable and sustainable demonstration of codifying and sustaining early college options for student. As an example, the strong professional development and coaching component of the project are designed to build SEA and LEA capacity.

The applicant has comprehensively demonstrated how it has already has and will continue to evaluate different forms of the project services to identify the critical components of the project that are crucial to its success and sustainability. As evidence of the project's continued evaluation and assessment of services, the applicant has proposed District Reach as a new setting for implementation.

The applicant has demonstrated the adaptability of several critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners. This is in part evidenced by the robust professional development and coaching structure with Instructional and Leadership coaching components, a new teacher institute and an annual summer institute. Additionally, there are three different settings for implementation (Early College High Schools, Comprehensive High Schools and District Reach (pp. 17-18) and by the various levels of partner implementation (p. 24). More specifically, some partners will work on building SEA capacity and setting policy in place for future implementation, other partners will actually implement early college Schools and still others will implement and showcase model schools.

The past project results of an average 95% graduation rate for the participating students from rural districts is strong evidence of the projects adaptability to different teaching and learning environments (p. 14).

The applicant has a strong and coherent professional development plan with five levels of training and coaching (pp. 19-20).

The proposed project will be expanded in rural North Carolina, Illinois, Mississippi, South Carolina and a yet to be determined fifth state to assess the replicability and adaptability of the project in a variety of locations. A particular strength of the proposed project is the implementation of the various project settings and levels of practice in different locations. This should provide viable and useful data with regards to sustainability and scaling-up.

Weaknesses:

While the professional development is clear and strongly related to the program outcomes of the proposal, it would have made for a stronger proposal to address specific training content, materials, toolkits, or other supports that other implementers would need in order to implement the project effectively and with fidelity.

Reader's Score: 5

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:

The applicant did not address this invitational priority.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/06/2014 09:19 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2014 09:19 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	0
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	25	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	26
Priority Questions		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
1. CPP1	3	0
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
1. CPP2	5	0
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
1. Early Learning	0	0
Total	108	26

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2014 Scale-Up Panel - 1: 84.411A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

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 a national need.
- (2) The extent of the expected impact of the project on relevant outcomes (as defined in the notice), including the estimated impact of the project on student outcomes (particularly those related to student achievement (as defined in this notice) and the breadth of the project's impact, compared with alternative practices or methods of addressing similar needs.
- (3) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address a national need and how the applicant determined an unmet demand for the proposed project exists. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to quantify the expected impact of their proposed project if it is successful, and explain why the applicant expects the proposed project to have the described impact. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the expected impact of the proposed project on student outcomes compares to other practices.

Strengths:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Criterion 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 extent to which the project would build the capacity of the applicant to scale up and sustain the project or would create an organization capable of expanding if successful outcomes are achieved.
- (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.
- (3) The sufficiency of the resources to support effective project implementation, including the project's plan for ensuring funding after the period of the Federal grant.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will build capacity so that the proposed project can be scaled to and sustained at a national level. The Secretary also encourages applicants to address how the proposed project will overcome

barriers that prevented the applicant from previously scaling the project. Lastly, the Secretary encourages applicants to consider the resources necessary for project implementation to ensure that the proposed project continues after the grant period ends.

Strengths:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Criterion 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 level (as defined in this notice) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of any partners and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions).

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

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. Applicants are encouraged to explain the organization's plan that will enable the project to operate at a national level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to address how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex, and rapidly growing projects, such as an i3 Scale-up grant.

Strengths:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Criterion 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 measurable 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 applicant clearly identifies two core questions to be addressed by the evaluation related to impact and implementation of the model, and to scale-up strategies (p. 40), which are the key components of the proposed project. The applicant describes important key sub-questions addressing each of the core questions and proposes relevant and appropriate methods for addressing each (p. 41, 47). The impact study recognizes that different methodologies are required to effectively evaluate each of the three settings proposed, increasing the likelihood that valuable information will be gathered regarding differential effectiveness of the project in diverse settings. For example, an experimental study using randomized selection of students for the treatment and control groups will be employed for the stand-alone early colleges setting (p. 41). The applicant provides evidence that the sample will have sufficient power to detect effects at the minimal level of .21 standard deviations (p. 42) and describes an analytic approach of multivariate regression modeling that includes student baseline characteristics and randomization blocks (p. 43). This approach meets the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservations (p. 43). Fidelity of implementation is evaluated for each of the three settings to ensure that services are implemented as planned (p. 45) and to increase the likelihood of explanation of detected impact. Fidelity of implementation measures are included for comparison schools to rule out contamination effects or effects of other initiatives in comparison schools (p. 47). The applicant clearly identifies the matching variables that will be used to ensure that the treatment and comparison schools for the comprehensive high school setting are appropriately matched (p. 44). The applicant includes key questions to be addressed by the implementation of scale-up strategies such as fidelity of implementation and organizational capacity development which has the ability to provide important information on the ability of the treatment to be successfully used in a range of settings with the intended impact (p. 47). [REDACTED] (p. 50) at the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro will serve as the external evaluator for the scale-up evaluation (p. 49) and the impact study (p. 42), and has extensive experience evaluating Institute of Education Sciences grants (p. 49). [REDACTED] of the Education Innovation Institute at the University of Northern Colorado will serve as the lead analyst, and has extensive experience with the types of proposed analyses (p. 50). The evaluators will be provided with sufficient resources of \$1.5 million (p. 50) to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly define what constitutes success in college-level courses; the applicant does not specify a grade earned or other rating that would determine success (p. 42). It is unclear whether the sample of 35 schools for the comprehensive school setting quasi-experimental study will have sufficient power to detect differences because no power analyses are included. As the applicant notes, this study will not meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards without reservation (p. 45). The applicant does not discuss how the district-wide setting will be evaluated because there is no discussion of comparing matched treatment and comparison districts.

Reader's Score: 26

Priority Questions

CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity - CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & 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:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices

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:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Weaknesses:

Criterion 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:

Criterion scored by another reviewer.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2014 09:19 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2014 02:16 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	0
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	0
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	25	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	28
Priority Questions		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
1. CPP1	3	0
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
1. CPP2	5	0
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
1. Early Learning	0	0
Total	108	28

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2014 Scale-Up Panel - 1: 84.411A

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

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 a national need.
- (2) The extent of the expected impact of the project on relevant outcomes (as defined in the notice), including the estimated impact of the project on student outcomes (particularly those related to student achievement (as defined in this notice) and the breadth of the project's impact, compared with alternative practices or methods of addressing similar needs.
- (3) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address a national need and how the applicant determined an unmet demand for the proposed project exists. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to quantify the expected impact of their proposed project if it is successful, and explain why the applicant expects the proposed project to have the described impact. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the expected impact of the proposed project on student outcomes compares to other practices.

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 extent to which the project would build the capacity of the applicant to scale up and sustain the project or would create an organization capable of expanding if successful outcomes are achieved.
- (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.
- (3) The sufficiency of the resources to support effective project implementation, including the project's plan for ensuring funding after the period of the Federal grant.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will build capacity so that the proposed project can be scaled to and sustained at a national level. The Secretary also encourages applicants to address how the proposed project will overcome

barriers that prevented the applicant from previously scaling the project. Lastly, the Secretary encourages applicants to consider the resources necessary for project implementation to ensure that the proposed project continues after the grant period ends.

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 clarity and coherence of the applicant's multi-year financial and operating model and accompanying plan to operate the project at a national level (as defined in this notice) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of any partners and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions).

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

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. Applicants are encouraged to explain the organization's plan that will enable the project to operate at a national level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to address how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex, and rapidly growing projects, such as an i3 Scale-up grant.

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 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 measurable 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 evaluation questions are clearly presented (p.e56) and will focus on both impact and scale-up effects. The methods presented to answer these questions are detailed specifically for each part of the evaluation and appear to be appropriate for answering the questions (pp. e56-e59). A series of subquestions are also used for the impact portion of the evaluation.
- As presented, the methods proposed for answering the research questions will include an experimental design for the impact phase of the study and a quasi-experimental design for the scale-up phase of the evaluation. The experimental design will meet WWC standards without reservations, and the quasi-experimental design will meet WWC standards with reservations (pp. e59-e61).
- The evaluation plan will address scale-up effects by measuring the fidelity of the scale-up efforts and the organizational capacity of those efforts. (pp. e63-e64)
- The analysis plan is detailed and includes a sampling plan and calculations of the expected effect sizes (pp. e58-60.)
- The resources budgeted for the evaluation appear to be sufficient, and the external evaluator has the experience and expertise to conduct the evaluation plan as presented. It should be noted that the external evaluator has experience conducting evaluations of this size and scope (pp. e65-e66).

Weaknesses:

- While acceptable measures for implementation and scale-up are presented, the applicant does not provide a rationale for setting these measures at the stated levels (p. e61).

Priority Questions

CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity - CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & 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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices

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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

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:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2014 02:16 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/05/2014 06:41 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	20	19
Quality of Project Design		
1. Quality of Project Design	25	24
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan/Personnel	25	23
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	30	0
Priority Questions		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity		
1. CPP1	3	0
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices		
1. CPP2	5	5
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
IP: Supporting High-Quality Early Learning		
1. Early Learning	0	0
Total	108	71

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - 2014 Scale-Up Panel - 1: 84.411A

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: North Carolina New Schools (U411A140003)

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 a national need.
- (2) The extent of the expected impact of the project on relevant outcomes (as defined in the notice), including the estimated impact of the project on student outcomes (particularly those related to student achievement (as defined in this notice) and the breadth of the project s impact, compared with alternative practices or methods of addressing similar needs.
- (3) 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.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will address a national need and how the applicant determined an unmet demand for the proposed project exists. Additionally, the Secretary encourages applicants to quantify the expected impact of their proposed project if it is successful, and explain why the applicant expects the proposed project to have the described impact. Applicants are also encouraged to explain how the expected impact of the proposed project on student outcomes compares to other practices.

Strengths:

- 1-The applicant provides clear evidence that the project addresses a national need. Achievement gaps (i.e., black/white, Hispanic/white) in 2013 reading and math performance, and comparative dropout data indicate that students are underperforming and exiting school early along racial lines (p1). Furthermore, assertions that students are faced with intense internal and external pressure to not enroll in college and are unprepared for postsecondary pursuits are confirmed by the the results of the 2013 AIR study on EC (appendix; p9). Both in-state and out-of-state project partners/supporters also agree this model is capable of addressing local and national need to offer another secondary structure for students who are underperforming/undercredited.
- 2-The applicant presents a sound rationale that expected impact from this project will match findings from its 2011 i3 Validation project. Findings from a resultant study on the i3 study reflect data from the applicant group that the EC model positively impacts success in secondary college preparatory courses and subsequent college enrollment (p8). A strong indicator of impact is past performance. In that 74% of EC schools in North Carolina had a graduation rate of at 95% and 7,000 students over a six-year period graduated high school with earned college credits, it is clear that some degree of anticipated student achievement impact is likely (p8). The summary of other What Works Clearinghouse studies highlighted that only one of thirteen interventions was found to have a positive impact on high school graduation (p13-14).
- 3-The narrative contains graduation achievement data from a 2013 study that clearly indicates the model is capable of maintaining the historically high rates of high school graduation and college enrollment results noted on page 8 (p9). Letters of commitment from North Carolina district superintendents and partner educational organizations seeking to join the project is, perhaps, the strongest evidence of demand for the project (p. e158-e170).

Weaknesses:

The applicant uses several dated studies to support assertions regarding national need. The use of a 2001 report on the likelihood of college student enrollment and 2005 data on student preparedness for college work weakens this section of the proposal (p6). It is likely that enrollment trends are not static and national studies on college student enrollment have been released since 2001 and 2005, respectively. The use of other data points or more recent data may have provided stronger support.

2-No weaknesses noted

3-No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 19

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

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

(1) The extent to which the project would build the capacity of the applicant to scale up and sustain the project or would create an organization capable of expanding if successful outcomes are achieved.

(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.

(3) The sufficiency of the resources to support effective project implementation, including the project's plan for ensuring funding after the period of the Federal grant.

Note: In responding to this criterion, the Secretary encourages applicants to explain how the proposed project will build capacity so that the proposed project can be scaled to and sustained at a national level. The Secretary also encourages applicants to address how the proposed project will overcome barriers that prevented the applicant from previously scaling the project. Lastly, the Secretary encourages applicants to consider the resources necessary for project implementation to ensure that the proposed project continues after the grant period ends.

Strengths:

1-The project builds the capacity of the applicant in that the established protocols and resources will be tested on out-of-state partners committed to implementing the model. Challenges and successes associated with satellite management, communication, program fidelity and assessment will provide the applicant with valuable strategies on how to support and guide out-of-state program/schools should the model be scaled beyond the sites in this proposal (p18). The formal establishment of model sites that would function as EC models will also build capacity of the organization in that feedback from interested groups would continually inform model development and sustainability (p19). Out-of-state sites will also generate interest in the local model and, possibly generate additional satellite sites.

2-The applicant clearly identifies two issues that thwarted its initial in-state scale efforts and commonly shared roadblocks in other states: dual enrollment policy and policy differences between K-12 and higher education (p26). The use of grant funds to build local capacity (i.e., policy lessons learned, tools and resources to build capacity, tips on leveraging partners) is an appropriate use of funds and will provide partners new to the initiative the resources, technical assistance and financial support needed to implement early colleges (p26; budget).

3-The applicant's strategies for ensuring support for project implementation and continuation after cessation of grant funds is sound. The applicant's current organizational operating budget, past i3 grants, 10-year history in the field and higher match amount for partners increases the likelihood that the applicant has access to stable resources and will continue to be an advocate for the EC model (p27). Efforts at partner stability, including a train-the-trainer coaching model and model fidelity built into a Design Principal Rubric Review, are conservative, in-house strategies to ensure that partners create self-sufficient systems with buy-in from educational and legislative partners in their region/state (p28-29). The investment in training, time and materials/supplies will likely support out-of-state partners as they repeat the training process with new schools in their region.

Weaknesses:

1-No weaknesses noted

2-No weaknesses noted

3-Beyond in-kind personnel costs, the narrative does not clearly indicate what non-grant funded resources the applicant will contribute to the project. With an established 10-year track record, commitment to advocating for the EC model and 77 established schools, the project should reflect some level of applicant investment reflective of its organizational commitment to advancing the EC model (p8; e88-e91).

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 level (as defined in this notice) during the project period.

(3) The extent to which the applicant demonstrates that it will have the resources to operate the project at the proposed level of scale during the project period and beyond the length of the grant, including the demonstrated commitment of any partners and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success (e.g., State educational agencies, teachers' unions).

(4) The extent to which the project director has experience managing large, complex, and rapidly growing projects.

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. Applicants are encouraged to explain the organization's plan that will enable the project to operate at a national level during and after the life of the grant. Applicants are also encouraged to address how the project director's past experience demonstrates an ability to manage large, complex, and rapidly growing projects, such as an i3 Scale-up grant.

Strengths:

1-The applicant presents a structured management plan timeline. The inclusion of clearly worded milestones and activities is coupled with persons responsible for executing the activity and quarterly targets for execution (p31-32). The timeline is a critical management tool in that it provides an at-a-glance summary of how disparate parts of the project interact. The key personnel graphics (table 2, figure 4) are strengths of the proposal because they display lines of direct report and FTE allocations.

2-The multi-year financial plan reflects priorities and activities in the narrative. The annotated budget delineates how costs were determined and will likely facilitate project leadership (p. e224-e236). The project will be guided by two full-time co-project directors, who will report to the Senior Director of District Services (p35).

3-The applicant has clearly demonstrated that it has the resources to deliver this project. The applicant provides a summary of secured private funding and letters of commitment (project partners) and support (community partners) that

further indicate extended support for the project.

4-The narrative provides evidence that the selected project director has the requisite experience managing large, complex, rapidly growing projects. As former project director of the applicant's i3 Validation grant, the project director guided the multi-layered initiative from 2012 to the present (p39). He has experience working with critical components of the proposed project, including EC coaches, LEA liaisons and IHE partners (p35). Perhaps most notable is his knowledge of and experience with guiding sites through day-to-day challenges associated with implementation and sustainability (p. e134-e137).

Weaknesses:

1-While the applicant provides project outcomes, they are not expressed as annual performance goals. For example, goal two will determine if the four-year graduation rate increases five percentage points by the end of grant year five (p29). The measure does not clearly indicate annual benchmarks for performance toward this goal. Also, the management plan does not clearly discuss the metrics slated to monitor project progress.

2-No weaknesses noted

3-No weaknesses noted

4-No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 23

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 measurable 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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & Productivity - CPP 1: Improving Cost-Effectiveness & 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:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices - CPP 2: Enabling Broad Adoption Effective Practices

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 applicant meets CPP2 in that NCNS has formalized the development and implementation process for the EC model. The applicant has a toolkit of resources for administrators and teachers to use as they create policies and procedures that reflect the model's design principles (p3).

b-The applicant has created a Design Principle Rubric Review that assists sites in implementing the EC model with fidelity (p28).

c-The applicant has completed the development of a toolkit of resources for schools with implementation guidance.

d-The applicant has committed to assess the replicability and adaptability of the practice by developing seven in-state Model Schools and establishing six EC in two partner states using the vetted model(p e15).

Weaknesses:

a-No weaknesses noted

b-A copy of the Design Principle Rubric Review is not included in the application packet. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if adaptability of critical components to different teaching and learning environments and to diverse learners is measured within the EC model.

c-No weaknesses noted

d-No weaknesses noted

Reader's Score: 5

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:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
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