

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/31/2016 04:56 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	10	7
Sub Total	10	7
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
1. Quality of Program Design	25	18
Sub Total	25	18
Preschool PFS Partnership		
Preschool PFS Partnership		
1. Preschool PFS Partnership	25	25
Sub Total	25	25
Quality of the Work Plan		
Quality of the Work Plan		
1. Quality of the Work Plan	25	25
Sub Total	25	25
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
1. Quality of Leadership	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Budget Narrative		
Budget Narrative		
1. Budget Narrative	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority		
1. Competitive Priority	5	3
Sub Total	5	3
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
1. Absolute Priority	0	0

	Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
1. Absolute Priority		0	0
	Sub Total	0	0
	Total	105	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - PFS Panel - 12: 84.419C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

- 1. The Secretary will consider the needs of the Target Population. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the magnitude of the need of the Target Population for the services to be provided by a potential PFS project. Applicants should clearly state and demonstrate the extent of the problem facing the Target Population using data and other relevant information.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides clear and definitive goals for its proposed Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) project; in particular, as it aims to address Minnesota's high poverty and achievement gaps in the areas of reading and math. The applicant further proposes to target school districts that serve low-income students-students whose poverty levels are 75% or greater as measured by free and reduced price lunch eligibility. Not to mention, those students who would not ordinarily have access to high-quality preschool programs. The VPK sites will address the above mentioned targeted population by providing the following: play-based learning, comprehensive family services, developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessment, smaller class sizes, and well-trained teachers. Additionally, the proposed project aims to supplement the \$26 million commitment made by the state's legislature in its commitment to provide high-quality preschool to schools and districts serving low income students in an effort to address achievement gaps per the data displayed in Exhibit 1. Further, per the results obtained from Minnesota's School Readiness Study administered during 2010-2012 clearly showed the disparity relative to the following five domains- 1) Physical development; 2) The arts; 3) Personal and Social Development; 4) Language and Literacy; and 5) Mathematical Thinking in comparison to their wealthier peers.

Weaknesses:

The applicant failed to provide a strong corollary to the data collected as a result of its Minnesota's School Readiness Study to that of "assuming" that its teachers use of evidence-based practices will support the children's social and emotional readiness skills.

Reader's Score: 7

Quality of the Preschool Program Design - Quality of the Preschool Program Design

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the intervention strategy is likely to improve student outcomes for the Target Population, based on quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical evidence, including the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable and will demonstrate student success. In responding to this criterion, applicants should identify clearly specified and measurable outcomes for the preschool program and explain how these outcomes can be achieved by the program. While these outcomes will inform the selection of Outcome Measures for the PFS project, they do not limit a grantee from evaluating additional Outcome Measures in the course of completing the Preschool PFS Feasibility Study.**

Strengths:

Based upon MDE's success in using the Pyramid Model for its preschool special education programs the MDE is fully confident in its planned implementation of the Pyramid Model to a subset of VPK sites in an effort to meet the stated

outcome measures for this PFS Project. The following are the intended goals for the MDE's proposed VPK program: 1) increase access to high-quality early learning programming for 4-year olds, regardless of their ability to pay; 2) Reduce educational achievement gaps; and 3) help ensure every child is ready to succeed in school and life. The applicant further listed the regulatory and statutory requirements of its existing VPK program which currently serves 74 districts and charter schools throughout Minnesota. Additionally, the applicant provides a thorough overview of its proposed use of The Pyramid Model to include its experiences and lessons gleaned from implementing the proposed model. The Pyramid Model as depicted in Exhibit 4 is a tiered system of support modeled after Response to Intervention (RTI). The Pyramid Model will provide positive behavioral supports to address struggling early learners in the areas of social and emotional development. The following are the tiers of the Pyramid Model aimed at improving social skills and decreasing challenging behavior(s): 1) Effective workforce; 2) Nurturing and Responsive Relationships; 3) High-quality Supportive environments; 4) Targeted School Emotional Supports ; and 5) Intensive Intervention. Additionally, the applicant proposes through PFS to explore the impact that job-embedded and sustained professional development will have upon improving student outcomes in the areas of social-emotional and academic domains via the implementation of the Pyramid Model. Moreover, Minnesota has been using and implementing the Pyramid Model since 2009, when it one of Minnesota's first Technical Assistance Center for Social and Emotional Intervention (TACSEI). The proposed professional development will comprise the following: 1) a cohesive series of workshops on the Pyramid Model Framework and associated practices; 2) implementation guides, data tools and materials to support practice implementation in their classrooms; and 3) coaching sessions with preschool teachers in their classrooms by trained Pyramid Model coaches. The applicant presented a Logic Model for its enhanced VPK program consisting of the following elements: 1) Inputs and Activities; 2) Outputs; 3) Short Term Outcomes; 4) Intermediate Outcomes; and 5) Long Term Outcomes(K-3). The MDE has a long standing history of realizing sustainability of its evidence-based program-The Pyramid Model.

Weaknesses:

The applicant lists the following intended goals:

- 1) Reduce educational achievement gaps; and
- 2) Help ensure every child is ready to succeed in school and life.

The above stated goals need to be quantifiable in an effort to ensure they can be measured and attained.

It is extremely important to identify the VPK sites to establish immediate buy-in; especially when the MDE has indicated capacity issues as it would be quite challenging in implementing the proposed Preliminary Logic Model as illustrated in Exhibit 6.

Reader's Score: 18

Preschool PFS Partnership - Preschool PFS Partnership

1. **The Secretary will consider the quality of the Preschool PFS Partnership. In evaluating a Preschool PFS Partnership, the Secretary will consider the following:**

Reader's Score: 25

Sub Question

1. **(c)(1) The quality of an existing Preschool PFS Partnership, including the history of the collaboration, or, if a Preschool PFS Partnership does not exist, the quality of the plan to form a Preschool PFS Partnership.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The applicant provides a detailed depiction as to how it will identify relevant partners to carryout the PFS initiative. The applicant provided relevant time factors as well as delineated responsibilities between the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and that of SRI International. The longstanding history between MDE and SRI provides a meaningful basis as the applicant is able to meet the intended goals, objectives, and outcomes associated with this project. The applicant further provided an additional analysis of prior projects and experiences which clearly provided specified measurable outcomes that would be favorable in meeting the objectives in this Preschool PFS Feasibility Study.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 15

- 2. (c)(2) The extent to which the roles and responsibilities of members or proposed members of a Preschool PFS Partnership are clearly described and are appropriate and sufficient to successfully implement a PFS project.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly identifies and confirms the interest of all of its proposed members who will be responsible for implementing its PFS Project. The applicant listed the following roles and responsibilities to include providing a detailed description of each as it relates to implementing PFS: 1) Service Providers, 2) Intermediary; 3) Investors; 4) Payors; and 5) an Independent Evaluator.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 10

Quality of the Work Plan - Quality of the Work Plan

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the work plan. In determining the quality of the work plan, the Secretary will consider the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 25

Sub Question

- 1. (d)(1) The adequacy of the work plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed Feasibility Study project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks on time. Applicants should identify whether a contractor will conduct the Feasibility Study and, if appropriate, the extent to which the timeline for selecting and hiring the contractor is reasonable and sufficient for completing the project on time and within budget.**

Strengths:

The applicant discussed how it will use SRI International to conduct the PFS Feasibility study, as well as the Pyramid Model Consortium to conduct the cost/benefit analysis portion of the feasibility study. Further, the MDE provides a comprehensive overview of how it intends to carry-out its 'Work Plan' by implementing 14 Tasks within an 18-month period. Additionally, the applicant provided a Feasibility Work Plan Table that would be used over the

Sub Question

two year period. The PFS Feasibility Study Organizational Structure Listed the personnel from the MDE, Stakeholder Review Group, SRI International, Pyramid Model Consortium, and the Cost/Benefit Consultant.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 12

2. **(d)(2) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring stakeholder feedback in the operation of the proposed Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot. If the Feasibility Study includes the reduction in special education placement as a Financial Benefit, the extent to which the work plan includes outreach to and involvement of the representatives from the State and local special education community or individuals with special education expertise, including groups representing families.**

Strengths:

The applicant provided a detailed visual as well as explanation of its proposed PFS Feasibility Study Organizational Structure to include relevant personnel. Moreover, the applicant vows to include the following as vested stakeholders: school administrators, teachers at the VPK sites, community leaders, state education officials, special educators, business leaders, parents of participating and identified young children. Further, the applicant provides a PFS Feasibility Study Work Plan that highlights the tasks, milestones, and the schedule needed for all relevant groups who will be instrumental in the project management, communication, development, and report writing of this PFS Feasibility Study.

Weaknesses:

none found.

Reader's Score: 10

3. **(d)(3) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and team and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

The applicant identified key staffers from the MDE and SRI to include adequately delineating the percentage of time that each would commit to meeting the intended goals of this project as displayed in Exhibit 9.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 3

Quality of the Project Leadership and Team - Quality of the Project Leadership and Team

1. **The Secretary will consider the quality of the project leadership and team. The Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant has the project and financial management experience necessary to manage the Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot, including:**

Reader's Score: 5

Sub Question

1. **(e)(1) Managing and overseeing similar projects (e.g., PFS or other project related work, experience with early childhood education) with specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes; and**

Strengths:

Per the submitted profiles of the project leadership, they all have the relevant background-knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to manage the Preschool PFS Feasibility Project. Additionally, the applicant provided supporting evidence of its past histories of managing and overseeing similar projects as outlined in Exhibit 9, to include providing a graphic identifying content and technical expertise of its prior project oversight and implementation.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 3

2. **(e)(2) Managing Federal grants, including plans for ensuring compliance with Federal guidelines.**

Strengths:

The applicant has demonstrated that it has the capacity to manage and comply with federal guidelines as evidenced by its past history of grant awards to include assurances that the MDE will follow Minnesota's procurement process that

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 2

Budget Narrative - Budget Narrative

1. **The Secretary will consider the adequacy of resources necessary to complete the Feasibility Study, including any philanthropic or other resources that may be contributed toward the project. In determining the adequacy of resources, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the budget will adequately support program activities and achieve desired outputs and outcomes.**

Strengths:

The MDE indicates its commitment to scaling the Pyramid Model for the purpose of enhancing the VPK program. Further, the MDE has identified additional resources to supplement the proposed budget. The budget presented within this proposal appears to be reasonable and necessary relative to providing the needed and adequate resources in addressing the goals and objectives outlined in this competition. The applicant was able to provide a budget narrative that clearly identified existing partnerships and identified resources needed to implement this project. Additionally, the applicant in its proposed Work Plan discussed its cost benefit analysis in implementing the PFS project. Lastly, the MDE provided its Indirect Cost Rate Agreement as it plans to incur over \$24,000 in indirect costs over a two-year period.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority

1. Competitive Priority: Outcome Measures Across Various Domains

To meet this priority, an applicant must propose a Feasibility Study to evaluate if PFS is viable that would evaluate social and emotional or Executive Functioning Outcome Measures, or both. These potential outcome measures may be predictive of future school success, cost savings, cost avoidance, and other societal benefits, and may appropriate to include in a PFS project. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant has met the Competitive Preference Priority for the Competition by addressing outcome measures across the five domains as displayed in Exhibit 2. Further, the applied use of the Pyramid Model will serve to fortify the potential outcome measures as an indicator for future school success as the Pyramid Model is a well-researched and evidence-based model in the promotion and development of young children's social and emotional development.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide sufficient detail relative to the non-quantifiable goals (bullets two and three) indicated for its proposed "new" VPK program

Reader's Score: 3

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Yes

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Strengths:

The MDE met the Absolute Priority for this competition through the proposed use of its VPK program that will further ameliorate long-term student achievement, kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth, and improved social and

emotional skills for the anticipated subset of schools it intends to serve.

Weaknesses:

None found.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/31/2016 04:56 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/27/2016 11:21 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	10	7
Sub Total	10	7
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
1. Quality of Program Design	25	21
Sub Total	25	21
Preschool PFS Partnership		
Preschool PFS Partnership		
1. Preschool PFS Partnership	25	24
Sub Total	25	24
Quality of the Work Plan		
Quality of the Work Plan		
1. Quality of the Work Plan	25	21
Sub Total	25	21
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
1. Quality of Leadership	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Budget Narrative		
Budget Narrative		
1. Budget Narrative	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
1. Absolute Priority	0	0

	Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
1. Absolute Priority		0	0
	Sub Total	0	0
	Total	105	93

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - PFS Panel - 12: 84.419C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

- 1. The Secretary will consider the needs of the Target Population. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the magnitude of the need of the Target Population for the services to be provided by a potential PFS project. Applicants should clearly state and demonstrate the extent of the problem facing the Target Population using data and other relevant information.**

Strengths:

The target population are children enrolled in a sample of state-funded voluntary pre-kindergarten sites who evidence the highest proportion of children from low-income backgrounds (i.e., 75% or more free and reduced-price lunch eligible). The project narrative clearly discusses the evidence base suggesting that the early learning of social and emotional skills is important. The project description also provides evidence that Minnesota children from low-income backgrounds perform lower than their more affluent peers on a kindergarten school readiness measure of social and emotional development. Thus, data is presented that demonstrates the importance of social and emotional development and how the target population lags behind the comparison group on a key outcome that a future Preschool Pay for Success project will seek to achieve.

Weaknesses:

Although one would assume that the relevant geographic location is the state of Minnesota, the location is not explicitly identified. Similarly, it is unclear if the feasibility study's target population will include three-year-olds, four-year-olds, or both. Finally, the number of children living in poverty who are not currently served through state funding (i.e., a voluntary prekindergarten program) is not discussed, making it difficult to ascertain the unmet need within the state.

Reader's Score: 7

Quality of the Preschool Program Design - Quality of the Preschool Program Design

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the intervention strategy is likely to improve student outcomes for the Target Population, based on quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical evidence, including the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable and will demonstrate student success. In responding to this criterion, applicants should identify clearly specified and measurable outcomes for the preschool program and explain how these outcomes can be achieved by the program. While these outcomes will inform the selection of Outcome Measures for the PFS project, they do not limit a grantee from evaluating additional Outcome Measures in the course of completing the Preschool PFS Feasibility Study.**

Strengths:

Beginning with a logic model, a description of the preschool program model to be implemented through Preschool Pay for Success, the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, is provided. Evidence documenting the positive impacts of the Pyramid Model on early academic and behavioral outcomes is discussed as is evidence documenting positive impacts of the Pyramid Model when used with children with disabilities in Minnesota. In particular, for children with disabilities between the ages of three and five years, enrollment in early

childhood special education sites that implement the Pyramid Model was associated with increased positive social emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skill, and use of appropriate behavior to meet needs relative to children in other Minnesota sites. Thus, there is an evidence base for the use of the Pyramid Model, which appears to meet the needs of children with disabilities. One would therefore expect the Pyramid Model to meet the needs of other children within the target population, and the description of the response to intervention (RTI) framework within the proposal suggests that it does. Minnesota's voluntary prekindergarten programs (VPK) also evidence characteristics associated with high-quality preschool instruction such as high-quality coordinated professional development, training, and coaching for school district and community-based early learning providers; and coordinated services with early childhood special education programs and programs serving English language learners and students experiencing homelessness.

With respect to measurable outcomes, training and coaching of coaches, administrators, and teachers is expected to impact short-term outcomes such as teachers' implementation of the Pyramid Model's evidence-based practices with high fidelity, children receiving the level of instruction appropriate to their needs, and improved classroom quality. Teacher implementation of the Pyramid Model and improved overall classroom quality from its implementation are expected to impact intermediate outcomes such as improved achievement in academic and social-emotional domains of children in enhanced voluntary prekindergarten programs (E-VPK) relative to children in the usual VPK. Children in E-VPK are also expected to show fewer suspension, expulsions, and behavior incidents. Longer-term outcomes that are expected to result from implementation of the Pyramid Model include improved academic and social-emotional readiness for kindergarten, fewer special education placements in elementary school, better performance on state-reported reading tests, less retention in grade, and less chronic absenteeism in first-, second-, and third-grade for E-VPK participants relative to VPK participants. Finally, teachers' of E-VPK classrooms are also expected to evidence higher levels of job satisfaction leading them to stay in their positions longer than teachers in VPK classrooms. The expected short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes are supported in part by a research base and in part by a logic model.

Weaknesses:

It cannot be determined from the project narrative if the Pyramid Model is solely an approach for implementing response to intervention or if it also includes an evidence-based curriculum; a specific curriculum is not defined and details are not provided regarding activities that constitutes universal promotion practices for all children (Tier 1), practices for children who need targeted social-emotional supports (Tier 2), and individualized behavior supports for children with significant social difficulties or persistent challenging behavior (Tier 3). It is also unclear if teachers of voluntary prekindergarten programs (VPK) or enhanced voluntary prekindergarten programs (E-VPK) will be required to have high qualifications (e.g., a bachelor's degree in early childhood education). These limitations make it difficult to evaluate the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program.

Reader's Score: 21

Preschool PFS Partnership - Preschool PFS Partnership

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the Preschool PFS Partnership. In evaluating a Preschool PFS Partnership, the Secretary will consider the following:**

Reader's Score: 24

Sub Question

- 1. (c)(1) The quality of an existing Preschool PFS Partnership, including the history of the collaboration, or, if a Preschool PFS Partnership does not exist, the quality of the plan to form a Preschool PFS Partnership.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

The proposed Preschool Pay for Success (PFS) Partnership is clearly described and includes a history of successful collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), SRI International, and Pyramid Model Consortium. These three entities will lead all aspects of the PFS feasibility study. In addition, service providers responsible for delivering interventions that achieve specific outcomes have already been identified and include school districts and charter schools implementing voluntary prekindergarten programs. Further, potential candidates to serve as intermediary who have been involved in PFS work are identified. Potential investors include, for example, the United Way and Minneapolis Federal Reserve while the MDE will likely serve as one possible government payor.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 15

- 2. (c)(2) The extent to which the roles and responsibilities of members or proposed members of a Preschool PFS Partnership are clearly described and are appropriate and sufficient to successfully implement a PFS project.**

Strengths:

The roles and responsibilities of members and proposed members of the Preschool Pay for Success (PFS) Partnership are clearly described and sufficient to successfully implement a PFS project. For example, the SRI International will support the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in developing a plan for selecting an intermediary that has the necessary project management expertise and knowledge of Minnesota's early learning community. SRI will also assist the MDE with identifying investors, and will work with the MDE to design a rigorous evaluation that would be implemented by an independent evaluator during PFS project.

Weaknesses:

The applicant identifies the McKnight Foundation, United Way of Minnesota, and Third Sector Capital Partners as potential intermediaries within the project narrative. However, evidence is not provided for one to determine the appropriateness of these nonprofits to successfully serve as an intermediary for a Pay for Success project.

Reader's Score: 9

Quality of the Work Plan - Quality of the Work Plan

The Secretary will consider the quality of the work plan. In determining the quality of the work plan, the Secretary will consider the following factors:

Reader's Score: 21

Sub Question

- 1. (d)(1) The adequacy of the work plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed Feasibility Study project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks on time. Applicants should identify whether a contractor will conduct the Feasibility Study and, if appropriate, the extent to which the timeline for selecting and hiring the contractor is reasonable and sufficient for completing the project on time and within budget.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Overall, the work plan appears to adequately meet the objectives of the proposed Feasibility Study project on time and within budget. In particular, the relationships among the feasibility study partners (i.e., the organizational structure and personnel) are clearly defined. Proposed time commitments for project personnel time are also adequate to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Preschool Pay for Success feasibility study. In addition, the activities for the Feasibility Study Work Plan have been organized into 14 tasks. For each task, the responsible partner and clearly defined responsibilities are identified as are dates that milestones are expected to be achieved.

Weaknesses:

Given the proposed project's short duration (i.e., 18-months), hiring members of the partnership (e.g., the intermediary, independent evaluator, and consultant) may represent a challenge to successful model implementation that is not addressed in the project's description. In addition, it appears that there is some redundancy between the proposed tasks and the task that have been accomplished in developing this proposal. For example, the Statement of Need and evidence base for the Pyramid Model as discussed within the present proposal identifies outcomes (e.g., grade retention, provision of special education services, early reading and executive functioning measures such as attention to task and task completion) for populations being served that would be expected to provide evidence of the Model's impact (cf. Task 7: Identify Outcomes for the Population Being Served). Although input from Stakeholders can result in additional outcomes of interest, this proposal already describes several important outcomes conceptualized as short-term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes. As such, a few of the proposed tasks appear to be completed and therefore should not be included in the scope of the proposed work.

Reader's Score: 9

2. **(d)(2) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring stakeholder feedback in the operation of the proposed Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot. If the Feasibility Study includes the reduction in special education placement as a Financial Benefit, the extent to which the work plan includes outreach to and involvement of the representatives from the State and local special education community or individuals with special education expertise, including groups representing families.**

Strengths:

Minnesota Department of Education has a history of seeking and using stakeholder input and ensures stakeholder input in the operation of the proposed Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot. For example, the Stakeholder Review Group will provide input on project tasks such as identifying and reviewing outcomes, review plans for implementing the intervention and the evaluation design, reviewing the possible safeguards regarding the separation of determinations about special education from the financial structure of a PFS project, report on any issues with the data being collected in VPK sites, and assist in identifying possible intermediary organizations. In addition, another stakeholder group that include individuals with expertise in special education will be included. Specifically, this special-focus stakeholder group will provide an in-depth review of the proposed plan to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected in the event that reduction of special education is proposed as a PFS outcome. This group will consist of 10-12 people representing local special education directors, special education teachers, parents of children with disabilities, disability law experts, and disability advocates. Thus, stakeholder involvement in the proposed feasibility study represents children with disabilities and their families.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

3. **(d)(3) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and team and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

Sub Question

Strengths:

Overall, the time commitment of project director and team and other key project personnel appear to be adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

It appears that the project director and team and other key personnel will be required to participate in weekly meetings. Given this task, the time commitment (or FTE-Full Time Equivalent) of the Minnesota Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education Professional Development Coordinator (5% FTE) and SRI International's Senior Consultant (3% FTE) appear low.

Reader's Score: 2

Quality of the Project Leadership and Team - Quality of the Project Leadership and Team

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the project leadership and team. The Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant has the project and financial management experience necessary to manage the Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot, including:**

Reader's Score: 5

Sub Question

- 1. (e)(1) Managing and overseeing similar projects (e.g., PFS or other project related work, experience with early childhood education) with specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes; and**

Strengths:

The proposed project team from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and SRI International has the substantive knowledge about early childhood, research and evaluation expertise, and a long track record of managing large, complex projects and grants on time and within budget. Moreover, members of the proposed SRI team are currently working on an early childhood Pay For Success (PFS) project in Chicago as the independent evaluator, which gives them valuable firsthand experience with how PFS projects are designed, implemented, and function. Seventeen projects that this partnership has worked on relevant to the present application are identified in the project narrative (e.g., a voluntary prekindergarten program, Ract to the Top-Early Learning Grant, Independent Evaluation of the Social Impact Bond Child-Parent Center for School Readiness, Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems, and Evaluation of Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant Program). Thus, the applicant, led by experienced key personnel, have important experience managing and overseeing similar projects suggesting that they have the experience necessary to manage the Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 3

- 2. (e)(2) Managing Federal grants, including plans for ensuring compliance with Federal guidelines.**

Strengths:

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has contract specialists in the Division of Agency Finance and Operations will support the grant team with all procurement activities, assuring compliance with all applicable federal and state policies. In addition, SRI International (SRI) maintains a Federal Wide Assurance with the Office

Sub Question

for Human Research Protections, and no SRI activity with human subjects may be conducted without prior approval of the IRB. Finally, the SRI team follows the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Accessibility Initiative (W3 WAI) in preparing products—presentations, papers, webinars, and websites—that adhere to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 749d). In short, MDE and SRI have a history of working together to support 508 compliance of project reports and other materials for dissemination. The collective suggests that all project activities will be conducted in compliance with Federal guidelines.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 2

Budget Narrative - Budget Narrative

- 1. The Secretary will consider the adequacy of resources necessary to complete the Feasibility Study, including any philanthropic or other resources that may be contributed toward the project. In determining the adequacy of resources, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the budget will adequately support program activities and achieve desired outputs and outcomes.**

Strengths:

In considering the resources necessary to complete the Feasibility Study, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and SRI International have the infrastructure and capacity to support the grant activities as necessary. Additionally, the budget will adequately support program activities and achieve desired outputs and outcomes. Notably, the MDE proposes to cover the salaries and benefits of the grant lead and professional development coordinator.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority

- 1. Competitive Priority: Outcome Measures Across Various Domains**
To meet this priority, an applicant must propose a Feasibility Study to evaluate if PFS is viable that would evaluate social and emotional or Executive Functioning Outcome Measures, or both. These potential outcome measures may be predictive of future school success, cost savings, cost avoidance, and other societal benefits, and may appropriate to include in a PFS project. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant proposes a Feasibility Study to evaluate the economic benefits associated with the enhancement of voluntary prekindergarten programs (E-VPK). In particular, cost savings associated with measurable outcomes (e.g., kindergarten readiness, improved social-emotional development, fewer students retained in grade, reductions in special education placements) and estimates of repayments expected for the target populations to be served in the enhanced VPK sites.

Weaknesses:

No notable weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 5

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Yes

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Strengths:

The applicant proposes a Feasibility Study to evaluate if Preschool Pay for Success is viable to expand and improve preschool programs for preschool aged children from low-income backgrounds. Several outcomes measures are proposed. Short-term outcomes include teachers' implementation of the Pyramid Model's evidence-based practices with high fidelity, children receiving the level of instruction appropriate to their needs, and improved classroom quality. Intermediate outcomes such as improved achievement in academic and social-emotional domains of development are expected for children in enhanced voluntary prekindergarten programs (E-VPK) relative to children in the usual VPK. Children in E-PVK are also expected to show fewer suspension, expulsions, and behavior incidents. Longer-term outcomes that are expected to result from implementation of the Pyramid Model include improved academic and social-emotional readiness for kindergarten, fewer special education placements in elementary school, better performance on state-reported reading tests, less retention in grade, and less chronic absenteeism in first-, second-, and third-grade for E-PVK participants relative to VPK participants. Finally, teachers of E-PVK classrooms are also expected to evidence higher levels of job satisfaction leading them to stay in their positions longer than teachers in VPK classrooms.

Weaknesses:

The age of children within the target population is not completely clear.

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 10/27/2016 11:21 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/31/2016 11:43 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Need for Project		
1. Need for Project	10	6
Sub Total	10	6
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
Quality of the Preschool Program Design		
1. Quality of Program Design	25	18
Sub Total	25	18
Preschool PFS Partnership		
Preschool PFS Partnership		
1. Preschool PFS Partnership	25	24
Sub Total	25	24
Quality of the Work Plan		
Quality of the Work Plan		
1. Quality of the Work Plan	25	16
Sub Total	25	16
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
Quality of the Project Leadership and Team		
1. Quality of Leadership	5	4
Sub Total	5	4
Budget Narrative		
Budget Narrative		
1. Budget Narrative	10	10
Sub Total	10	10
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
Sub Total	5	5
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study		
1. Absolute Priority	0	0

	Sub Total	0	0
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study			
1. Absolute Priority		0	0
	Sub Total	0	0
	Total	105	83

Technical Review Form

Panel #12 - PFS Panel - 12: 84.419C

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Minnesota Department of Education (S419C170009)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Need for Project

1. The Secretary will consider the needs of the Target Population. In determining the need for the proposed project, the Secretary will consider the magnitude of the need of the Target Population for the services to be provided by a potential PFS project. Applicants should clearly state and demonstrate the extent of the problem facing the Target Population using data and other relevant information.

Strengths:

The applicant addressed the target population as those that were eligible for services as free or reduced priced lunch in the voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) funded sites.

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides insufficient information for this question. The applicant does not clearly state and demonstrate the extent of the problem facing the Target Population using data. The narrative states "seventy-four school districts across the state were awarded funding to establish VPK sites, which will allow more than 3,300 children to attend preschool free of charge" but the applicant does not provide information on how many out of the 3,300 is in the highest proportion of high-needs children. The applicant provides insufficient and inadequate information for this question.

Reader's Score: 6

Quality of the Preschool Program Design - Quality of the Preschool Program Design

1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed preschool program, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the intervention strategy is likely to improve student outcomes for the Target Population, based on quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical evidence, including the extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable and will demonstrate student success. In responding to this criterion, applicants should identify clearly specified and measurable outcomes for the preschool program and explain how these outcomes can be achieved by the program. While these outcomes will inform the selection of Outcome Measures for the PFS project, they do not limit a grantee from evaluating additional Outcome Measures in the course of completing the Preschool PFS Feasibility Study.

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a strong design of the pre-school program and explains later plans for deal structuring of this project. The goals, objectives, and outcomes for which the intervention strategy is likely to improve student outcomes for the target population are clearly listed. An example of this is how relative to peers of children who attended VPK, peers of children who attended E-VPK will demonstrate: reduction in special education placements; better performance on state achievement tests at grades 1, 2, and 3; less retention in grade at grades 1, 2, and 3; fewer Behavioral Incident Reports; and less chronic absenteeism. There will also be improved outcomes in the social-emotional and academic domains.

Weaknesses:

The applicant lacks important information needed to address this question. While the narrative states that VPK programs are required to "coordinate with all relevant school district programs and services including early childhood special education and those that serve English language learners and students experiencing homelessness," the applicant does not provide sufficient detail to how the program achieves that goal. The applicant lacks information based on quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical evidence on how much input and activity are needed to create change for the outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 18

Preschool PFS Partnership - Preschool PFS Partnership

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the Preschool PFS Partnership. In evaluating a Preschool PFS Partnership, the Secretary will consider the following:**

Reader's Score: 24

Sub Question

- 1. (c)(1) The quality of an existing Preschool PFS Partnership, including the history of the collaboration, or, if a Preschool PFS Partnership does not exist, the quality of the plan to form a Preschool PFS Partnership.**

Strengths:

The applicant identified existing partnerships and described a positive history of collaboration with the evaluation and the technical assistance providers. For the other partners, there was sufficient and adequate information on the tools that will be used to identify partners through existing networks. In discussing the implementing partners, the applicant was able to identify potential barriers to the Pay for Success model, such as, the capacity of VPK sites to take on the substantial commitment under service providers. The quality of the plan is adequate and sufficient to form a PFS Partnership.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 15

- 2. (c)(2) The extent to which the roles and responsibilities of members or proposed members of a Preschool PFS Partnership are clearly described and are appropriate and sufficient to successfully implement a PFS project.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly described the roles and responsibilities of existing partners and other potential partners that would assume the roles of payors, evaluator, investors, intermediary, and service providers. These descriptions are appropriate and sufficient to successfully implement a PFS project.

Weaknesses:

The applicant mentioned having the McKnight Foundation potentially assume the role of an intermediary. It is unlikely a foundation will assume the role of an intermediary. Foundations typically fund evaluations and provide financing guarantees in PFS projects.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 9

Quality of the Work Plan - Quality of the Work Plan

1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the work plan. In determining the quality of the work plan, the Secretary will consider the following factors:

Reader's Score: 16

Sub Question

1. (d)(1) The adequacy of the work plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed Feasibility Study project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks on time. Applicants should identify whether a contractor will conduct the Feasibility Study and, if appropriate, the extent to which the timeline for selecting and hiring the contractor is reasonable and sufficient for completing the project on time and within budget.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly identifies the 14 tasks that need to be accomplished in the 18-months and clearly lays out the timeframe of each task in the gantt chart. Each task has detailed information on the responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks on time. These tasks are reasonable and sufficient for completing the project on time and within budget.

Weaknesses:

The applicant lacks information on the steps or timeframe to hire a consultant. There is reasonable time and budget to hire a consultant, but the description of the timeline is missing from the narrative.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (d)(2) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring stakeholder feedback in the operation of the proposed Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot. If the Feasibility Study includes the reduction in special education placement as a Financial Benefit, the extent to which the work plan includes outreach to and involvement of the representatives from the State and local special education community or individuals with special education expertise, including groups representing families.

Strengths:

The applicant describes that the feasibility study will include the reduction in special education placement as an outcome measure. As part of task 4, "develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan," the applicant describes its extensive history and experience with stakeholder engagement. Specific descriptions are made to explain engagement with the Early Learning Council and parents of young children with disabilities, child advocates, etc. for previous initiatives.

Weaknesses:

While there is mention of the applicant's track record engaging the Early Learning Council and parents of young children with disabilities, child advocates, etc. for previous initiatives, there is no description on the outreach and involvement of representatives from the State and local special education communities for this PFS initiative. Thus, there is insufficient information to address the adequacy of procedures for ensuring stakeholder feedback in the operation of the proposed project.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (d)(3) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and team and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

It is important to see local government leadership in PFS deals, thus the time and eagerness from MDE is appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. From the Minnesota Department of Education, the grant lead will spend 25 percent of her time, and the grant co-lead will spend 10 percent of his time on the project. This time commitment is appropriate and adequate given that SRI will be responsible for the feasibility portion of the activities.

Weaknesses:

The PFS feasibility lead will spend 30 percent of her time on the project, while the PFS feasibility co-lead from SRI will spend 13 percent from SRI. The work plan includes conceptualizing the project, review of data analyses, and writing of memos, as well as contribute to the evaluation plan and the final PFS feasibility report. This is insufficient and inadequate time for the PFS project given the extensive array of activities the co-leads will be responsible for carrying out under the work plan.

Reader's Score: 1

Quality of the Project Leadership and Team - Quality of the Project Leadership and Team

- 1. The Secretary will consider the quality of the project leadership and team. The Secretary will consider the extent to which the applicant has the project and financial management experience necessary to manage the Preschool PFS Feasibility Pilot, including:**

Reader's Score: 4

Sub Question

- 1. (e)(1) Managing and overseeing similar projects (e.g., PFS or other project related work, experience with early childhood education) with specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes; and**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates the extensive experience from MDE on administering, coordinating and supporting high-quality early intervention and education initiatives for young children, especially from its key personnel: grant Lead, grant co-lead, data analyst and early childhood special education professional development coordinator. SRI has Social Impact Bond evaluation experience, as well as expertise in developing and evaluating early childhood programs and services. This is adequate and appropriate for the subject matter design and PFS evaluation portion of the project.

Weaknesses:

The MDE does not mention PFS design or implementation experience from existing personnel in the narrative. The applicant also does not describe a plan to compensate for the lack of PFS design and implementation experience.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 2

2. (e)(2) Managing Federal grants, including plans for ensuring compliance with Federal guidelines.

Strengths:

The applicant displays examples of extensive experience in managing federal grants with various early childhood programs from both SRI and MDE. The examples of previous federal grants SRI and MDE have managed shows adequate and appropriate experience with the compliance and management of federal grants.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 2

Budget Narrative - Budget Narrative

1. The Secretary will consider the adequacy of resources necessary to complete the Feasibility Study, including any philanthropic or other resources that may be contributed toward the project. In determining the adequacy of resources, the Secretary will consider the extent to which the budget will adequately support program activities and achieve desired outputs and outcomes.

Strengths:

The applicant displays clear organizational and corporate resources from MDE and SRI to complete the proposed work of this grant. It is also explained that MDE will request a single-source contract with SRI given its experience with Pay for Success and expertise in evaluation with early learning initiatives. The budget narrative includes defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones that will adequately support program activities to achieve desired outputs and outcomes.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 10

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority

1. Competitive Priority: Outcome Measures Across Various Domains
To meet this priority, an applicant must propose a Feasibility Study to evaluate if PFS is viable that would evaluate social and emotional or Executive Functioning Outcome Measures, or both. These potential outcome measures may be predictive of future school success, cost savings, cost avoidance, and other societal benefits, and may appropriate to include in a PFS project. (up to 5 points)

Strengths:

The applicant uses the pyramid model for supporting social emotional competence in infants and young children. The model is a validated positive behavior and support framework for early educators to promote young children's social and emotional development. The applicant includes potential outcome measures that may be predictive of future school success, cost savings, and other societal benefits that are appropriate to include in a PFS project. This is adequate and appropriate to meet the competitive priority.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 5

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Yes

Reader's Score: 0

Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study - Absolute Priority – Feasibility Study

1. Under this priority, the applicant must propose a Feasibility Study that will determine the viability of using a PFS approach to expand or improve a preschool program for a Target Population, and describe the potential Outcome Measures the applicant proposes to identify and evaluate for appropriateness for PFS. Any applicant that includes a Feasibility Study for a PFS project that proposes to reduce the need for special education and related services as an Outcome Measure must also include at least one other meaningful and substantive Outcome Measure of short-, medium-, or longterm student achievement, such as kindergarten readiness, reading and math growth or achievement, and improved social and emotional skills.

Strengths:

The applicant is trying to expand the Pyramid Model for the target population with a diverse number of outcome measures from short- to long- term timeframes. The plan is well thought out and is adequate for the PFS project.

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/31/2016 11:43 AM